VARIOUS

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Содержание

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DAILY BEAUTY

Toward the end of a city morning, that is, about four o'clock in the afternoon, Stanford Grey, and his guest, Daniel Tomes, paused in an argument which had engaged them earnestly for more than half an hour. What they had talked about it concerns us not to know. We take them as we find them, each leaning back in his chair, confirmed in the opinion that he had maintained, convinced only of his opponent's ability and rectitude of purpose, and enjoying the gradual subsidence of the excitement that accompanies the friendliest intellectual strife as surely as it does the gloved set-tos between those two "talented professors of the noble science of self-defence" who beat each other with stuffed buck-skin, at notably brief intervals, for the benefit of the widow and children of the late lamented Slippery Jim, or some other

equally mysterious and eminent person.

The room in which they sat was one of those third rooms on the first floor, by which city house-builders, self-styled architects, have made the second room useless except at night, in their endeavor to reconcile a desire for a multitude of apartments with the fancied necessity that compels some men to live where land costs five dollars the square foot. The various members of Mr. Grey's household designated this room by different names. The servants called it the library; Mrs. Grey and two small people, the delight and torment of her life, papa's study; and Grey himself spoke of it as his workshop, or his den. Against every stretch of wall a bookcase rose from floor to ceiling, upon the shelves of which the books stood closely packed in double ranks, the varied colors of the rows in sight wooing the eye by their harmonious arrangement. A pedestal in one corner supported a half-size copy of the Venus of Milo, that masterpiece of sculpture; in its faultless amplitude of form, its large life-giving loveliness, and its sweet dignity, the embodiment of the highest type of womanhood. In another corner stood a similar reduction of the Flying Mercury. Between the bookcases and over the mantel-piece hung prints;—most noticeable among them, Steinla's engraving of Raphael's Sistine Madonna, and Toschi's reproduction, in lines, of the luminous majesty of Correggio's St. Peter and St. Paul; and these were but specimens of the treasures inclosed in a huge portfolio that stood where the light fell favorably upon it. Opposite Grey's chair, when in

its place, (it was then wheeled half round toward his guest,) a portrait of Raphael and one of Beethoven flanked a copy of the Avon bust of Shakespeare; and where the wallpaper peeped through this thick array of works of literature and art, it showed a tint of soft tea-green. In the middle of the room a large library-table groaned beneath a mass of books and papers, some of them arranged in formal order, others disarranged by present use into that irregular order which seems chaotic to every eye but one, while for that one the displacement of a single sheet would insure perplexity and loss of time. But neither spreading table nor towering cases seemed to afford their owner room enough to store his printed treasures. Books were everywhere. Below the windows the recesses were filled out with crowded shelves; the door of a closet, left ajar, showed that the place was packed with books, roughly or cheaply clad, and pamphlets. At the bottom of the cases, books stretched in serried files along the floor. Some had crept up upon the library-steps, as if, impatient to rejoin their companions, they were mounting to the shelves of their own accord. They invaded all accessible nooks and crannies of the room; big folios were bursting out from the larger gaps, and thin quartos trickling through chinks that otherwise would have been choked with dust; and even from the mouldings above the doors bracketed shelves thrust out, upon which rows of volumes perched, like penguins on a ledge of rock. In fact, books flocked there as martlets did to Macbeth's castle; there was "no jutty frieze or coigne of vantage" but a book had made

it his "pendent bed,"—and it appeared "his procreant cradle" too; for the children, in calling the great folios "papa-books" and "mamma-books," seemed instinctively to have hit upon the only way of accounting for the rapid increase and multiplication of volumes in that apartment.

Upon this scene the light fell, tempered by curtains, at the cheapness and simplicity of which a fashionable upholsterer would have sneered, but toward whose graceful folds, and soft, rich hues, the study-wearied eye turned ever gratefully. The two friends sat silently for some minutes in ruminative mood, till Grey, turning suddenly to Tomes, asked,—

"What does Iago mean, when he says of Cassio,—

> 'He hath a daily beauty in his life,
> That makes me ugly'?"

"How can you ask the question?" Tomes replied; adding, after a moment's pause, "he means, more plainly than any other words can tell, that Cassio's truthful nature and manly bearing, his courtesy, which was the genuine gold of real kindness brought to its highest polish, and not a base alloy of selfishness and craft galvanized into a surface-semblance of such worth, his manifest reverence for and love of what was good and pure and noble, his charitable, generous, unenvious disposition, his sweetness of temper, and his gallantry, all of which found expression in face or action, made a character so lovely and so beautiful that every

daily observer of them both found him, Iago, hateful and hideous by comparison."

Grey. I suspected as much before I had the benefit of your comment; which, by the way, ran off your tongue as glibly as if you were one of the folk who profess Shakespeare, and you were threatening the world with an essay on Othello. But sometimes it has seemed to me as if these words meant more; Shakespeare's mental vision took in so much. Was the beauty of Cassio's life only a moral beauty?

Tomes. For all we know, it was.

Grey. I say, perhaps, or—No,—Cassio has seemed to me not more a gallant soldier and a generous spirit than a cultivated and accomplished gentleman; he, indeed, shows higher culture than any other character in the tragedy, as well as finer natural tastes; and I have thought that into the scope of this phrase, "daily beauty," Shakespeare took not only the honorable and lovely traits of moral nature, to which you, and perhaps the rest of the world with you, seem to limit it, but all the outward belongings and surroundings of the personage to whom it is applied. For these, indeed, were a part of his life, of him,—and went to make up, in no small measure, that daily beauty in which he presented so strong a contrast to Iago. Look at "mine Ancient" closely, and see, that, with all his subtle craft, he was a coarse-mannered brute, of gross tastes and grovelling nature, without a spark of gallantry, and as destitute of courtesy as of honor. We overrate his very subtlety; for we measure it by its effects, the woful and

agonizing results it brings about; forgetting that these, like all results, or resultants, are the product of at least two forces,—the second, in this instance, being the unsuspecting and impetuous nature of Othello, Had Iago undertaken to deceive any other than such a man, he would have failed. Why, even simple-hearted Desdemona, who sees so little of him, suspects him; that poor goose, Roderigo, though blind with vanity and passion, again and again loses faith in him; and his wife knows him through and through. Believe me, he had no touch of gentleness, not one point of contact with the beautiful, in all his nature,—while Cassio's was filled up with gentleness and beauty, and all that is akin to them.

Tomes. His weakness for wine and women among them?—But thanks for your commentary. I am quite eclipsed. On you go, too, in your old way, trying to make out that what is good is beautiful,—no, rather that what is beautiful is good.—Do you think that Peter and Paul were well-dressed? I don't believe that you would have listened to them, if they were not.

Grey. I'm not sure about St. Peter,—or whether it was necessary or proper that he should have been well-dressed, in the general acceptation of the term. You forget that there is a beauty of fitness. Beside, I have listened, deferentially and with pleasure, to a fisherman in a red shirt, a woollen hat, and with his trousers tucked into cow-hide boots; and why should I not have listened to the great fisherman of Galilee, had it been my happy fortune to live within sound of his voice?

Tomes. Ay, if it had been a fine voice, perhaps you might.

Grey. But as to Saint Paul I have less doubt, or none. I believe that he appeared the gentleman of taste and culture that he was.

Tomes. When he made tents? and when he lived at the house of one Simon, a tanner?

Grey. Why not? What had those accidents of Paul's life to do with Paul, except as occasions which elicited the flexibility of his nature and the extent of his capacity and culture?

Tomes. In making tents? Tent-making is an honest and a useful handicraft; but I am puzzled to discover how it would afford opportunity for the exhibition of the talents of such a man as Paul.

Grey. Not his peculiar talents, perhaps; though, on that point, those who sat under the shadow of his canvas were better able to judge than we are. For a man will make tents none the worse for being a gentleman, a scholar, and a man of taste,—but, other things being equal, the better. Your general intelligence and culture enter into your ability to perform the humblest office of daily life. An educated man, who can use his hands, will make an anthracite coal-fire better and quicker after half a dozen trials than a raw Irish servant after a year's experience; and many a lady charges her housemaid with stupidity and obstinacy, because she fails again and again in the performance of some oft-explained task which to the mistress seems "so simple," when there is no obstinacy in the case, and only the stupidity of a poor neglected creature who had been taught nothing till she came to

this country, not even to eat with decency, and, since she came, only to do the meanest chores. As to living with a tanner, I am no Brahmin, and believe that a man may not only live with a tanner, but be a tanner, and have all the culture, if not all the learning and the talent, of Simon's guest. Thomas Dowse pointed the way for many who will go much farther upon it than he did.

Tomes. The tanners are obliged to you. But of what real use is that process of intellectual refinement upon which you set so high a value? How much better is discipline than culture! Of how much greater worth, to himself and to the world, is the man who by physical and mental training, the use of his muscles, the exercise of his faculties, the restraint of his appetites,—even those mental appetites which you call tastes,—has acquired vigor, endurance, self-reliance, self-control! Let a man be pure and honorable, do to others as he would have them do to him, and, in the words of the old Church of England Catechism, "learn and labor truly to get his own living in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call him," and what remains for him to do, and of time in which to do it, is of very small importance.

Grey. You talk like what you are.

Tomes. And that is–?

Grey. Pardon me,—a cross between a Stoic and a Puritan:—morally, I mean.

Tomes. Don't apologize. You might say many worse things of me, and few better. But telling me what I am does not disprove what I say.

Grey. Do you not see? you cannot fail to see, that, after the labor of your human animal has supplied his mere animal needs, provided him with shelter, food, and clothes, he must set himself about something else. Having made life endurable, he will strive to make it comfortable, according to his notions of comfort. Comfort secured, he will seek pleasure; and among the earliest objects of his endeavors in this direction will be that form of pleasure which results from the embellishment of his external life; the craving that he then supplies being just as natural, that is, just as much an inevitable result of his organization, as that which first claimed his thought and labor.

Tomes. A statement of your case entirely inconsistent with the facts that bear upon it What do you think of your red savage, who, making no *pro-vision* for even his animal needs, but merely supplying them for the moment as he can, and living in squalor, filth, and extreme discomfort, yet daubs himself with grease and paint, and decorates his head with feathers, his neck with bear's claws, and his feat with gaudily-stained porcupine's quills? What of your black barbarian, whose daily life is a succession of unspeakable abominations, and who embellishes it by blackening his teeth, tattooing his skin, and wearing a huge ring in the gristle of his nose? Either of them will give up his daily food, and run the risk of starvation, for a glass bead or a brass button. This desire for ornament is plainly, then, no fruit of individual development, no sign of social progress; it has no relations whatever with them, but is merely a manifestation of that vanity, that lust of the eye

and pride of life, which we are taught to believe inherent in all human nature, and which the savage exhibits according to his savageness, the civilized man according to his civilization.

Grey. You're a sturdy fellow, Tomes, but not strong enough to draw that conclusion from those premises, and make it stay drawn. The savage does order his life in the preposterous manner which you have described; but he does it because he is a savage. He has not the wants of the civilized man, and therefore he does not wait to supply them before he seeks to gratify others. When man rises in the scale of civilization, his whole nature rises. You can't mount a ladder piecemeal; your head will go up first, unless you are an acrobat, and choose to go up feet foremost; but even if you are Gabriel Ravel, your whole body must needs ascend together. The savage is comfortable, not according to your notions of comfort, but according to his own. Comfort is not positive, but relative. If, with your present habits, you could be transported back only one hundred years to the best house in London,—a house provided with all that a princely revenue could then command,—you would find it, with all its splendor, very uncomfortable in many respects. The luxuries of one generation become the comforts of the next, the necessaries of life to the next; and what is comfort for any individual at any period depends on the manner in which he has been brought up. So, too, the savage decorates himself after his own savage tastes. His smoky wigwam or his filthy mud hut is no stronger evidence of his barbarous condition than his party-colored face, or the hoop

of metal in his nose. Call this desire to enjoy the beauty of the world and to be a part of it the lust of the eye, or whatever name you please, you will find, that, with exceedingly rare exceptions, it is universal in the race, and that its gratification, although it may have an indirectly injurious effect on some individuals tends to harmonize and humanize mankind, to lift them above debasing pleasures, and to foster the finer social feelings by promoting the higher social enjoyments.

Tomes. Yes; it makes Mrs. A. snub Mrs. B. because the B.-bonnet is within a hair's breadth's less danger of falling down her back, or is decorated with lace made by a poor bonnetless girl in one town of Europe, at a time when fashion has declared that it should bloom with flowers made by a poor shoeless girl in another: it instigates Mrs. C. to make a friendly call on Mrs. D. for the purpose of exulting over the inferior style in which her house is furnished: it tempts F. to overreach his business friend, or to embezzle his employer's money, that he may live in a house with a brown-stone front and give great dinners twice a month: and it sustains G. in his own eyes as he sits at F.'s table stimulating digestion by inward sneers at the vulgar fashion of the new man's plate or the awkwardness of his attendants: and perhaps, worse than all, it tempts H. to exhibit his pictures, and Mrs. I. to exhibit herself, "for the benefit of our charitable institutions," in order that the one may read fulsome eulogies of his munificence and his taste, and the other see a critical catalogue of the beauties of her person and her costume in all the daily papers. Such are

the social benefits of what you call the desire to be a part of the world's beauty.

Grey. Far from it! They have no relation to each other. You mistake the occasion for the cause, the means for the motive. Your alphabet is in fault. Such a set of vain, frivolous, dishonest, mean, hypocritical, and insufferably vulgar letters would be turned out of any respectable, well-bred spelling-book. Vanity, frivolity, dishonesty, meanness, hypocrisy, and vulgarity can be exhibited in all the affairs of life, not excepting those whose proper office is to sweeten and to beautify it; but it does not need all your logical faculty to discover that there is not, therefore, any connection between a pretty bonnet, or an elegantly furnished house, and the disposition to snub and sneer at those who are without them,—between dishonesty and the desire to live handsomely and hospitably,—between a cultivated taste for the fine arts and hypocrisy or a vulgar desire for notoriety and consequence.

Tomes. Perhaps so. But they are very often in each other's company.

Grey. And then, of course, the evil taints the reputation of the good, even with thinking men like you; and how much more with those who have your prejudices without your sense! But note well that they are not oftener in company—these tastes and vices —than honesty and meanness, good-nature and clownishness, sincerity and brutality, hospitality and debauchery, chastity and the absence of that virtue without which all others are as nothing.

And let me remind you, by the way, that we of this age and generation make it our business, in fact, feel it our duty, to violate the injunction of the English Catechism, and get *out* of that state of life in which we find ourselves, into a better, as soon as possible. And even old Mother Church does not insist upon content so strongly as you made her seem to do; she speaks of the state of life to which her catechumen "shall" be, not "has" been, called; and thus makes it possible for a dean to resolve to be content with a bishopric, and a bishop to muse upon the complete satisfaction with which he would grasp an archbishop's crosier, without forfeiture of orthodoxy.

Tomes would doubtless have replied; but at this point the attention of the disputants was attracted by the rustle of silk; there was a light, quick tap at the glass-door which separated the den of books from the middle room, and before an answer could be given the emblazoned valves opened partly, and a sweet, decided voice asked, "Please, may we come in? or" (and the speaker opened the doors wide) "are you and Mr. Tomes so absorbed in construing a sentence in a book that nobody ever reads, that ladies must give place to lexicons?"

"Enter, of course," cried Grey, "and save me from annihilation by Tomes's next reply, and both of us from our joint stupidity."

And so Mrs. Grey entered, and there were salutations, and presentation of Mr. Tomes to Miss Laura Larches, and introduction to each other of the same gentleman and Mr. Carleton Key, who attended the ladies. Abandoning the only four

chairs in the room to the others, Mrs. Grey sank down upon a hassock with a sigh of satisfaction, and was lost for a moment in the rising swell of silken-crested waves of crinoline. Emerging in another moment as far as the shoulders, she turned a look of intelligence and inquiry upon her husband, who said, "When you came in, Tomes and I were talking about"—

Mrs. Grey. Something very important, I've no doubt; but we've your own confession that you were stupid, and I've no notion of permitting a relapse. You were doubtless discussing your favorite subject, Dante, who, as far as I can discover, was more a politician than a poet, and went to his *Inferno* only for the pleasure of sending the opposite party there, and quartering them according to his notion of their deserts. But he and they are dead and buried long ago. Let them rest. We should much rather have you tell us whether his poor countrymen of to-day are to have their liberty when that ugly Emperor beats the Austrians; for beat them he surely will.

Grey. That is a subject of great moment, and one in which I, perhaps, feel no less interest than you; but did you never think that the question, whether these thousands of Italians have liberty or even food to-day, is one of a few months', or, at most, a few years', concern, while the soul's experience of that one Italian who died more than five hundred years ago will be a fruitful theme forever?

Mrs. Grey. Why, so it will! I never did think of that. And now I'll not think of it. Here we are just come from a wedding, and

before you ask us how the bride looked, or even what she had on, you begin to talk to us about that grim old Florentine, who looks like a hard-featured Scotch woman in her husband's night-cap, and who wrote such a succession of frightful things! Where is all your interest in Kitty Jones? I've seen you talk to her by the half-hour, and heard you say she is a charming woman; and now she marries,—and you not only won't go to the wedding, but you don't ask a word about it.

Grey. You seem to forget, Nelly, that I saw one wedding all through, and, indeed, bore as prominent a part in it as one of my downtrodden sex could aspire to; and as the Frenchman said, who went on an English fox-chase, *"Une fois, c'est assez;* I am ver' satisfy." The marriage service I can read in ten minutes whenever I need its solace; rich morning-dresses are to be seen by scores in the Academy of Music at every *matinée,* as garnish to Verdi's music; and as to Miss Kitty Jones, I am sure that she, like all brides, never looked so ill as she did to-day. I would do anything in my power to serve her, and would willingly walk a mile to have half an hour's chat with her; but to-day I could not serve her, nor could she talk with me; so why should I trouble myself about the matter? Had I gone, I should only have seen her flushed and nervous, her poor fresh-caught husband looking foolish and superfluous, and an uncomfortable crowd of over-dressed, ill-dressed people, engaged in analyzing her emotions, estimating the value of her wedding-presents, and criticizing each other's toilettes.

Mrs.Grey. You're an unfeeling wretch!

Grey. Of course I am. Any woman will break her neck to see two people, for whom she does not care a hair-pin, stand up, one in white and the other in black, and mumble a few words that she knows by heart, and then take position at the end of a room and have "society" paraded up to them by solemn little corporals with white favors, and then file off to the rear for rations of Périgord pie and Champagne.

Tomes. Well said, Grey! Here's another of the many ways of wasting life by your embellishment of it.

Mr. Key. I don't know precisely what Mr. Tomes means; but as to ill-dressed people, I'm sure that the set you meet at the Jones's are the best-dressed people in town; and I never saw in Paris more splendid toilettes than were there this morning.

Miss Larches. Why, to be sure! What can Mr. Grey mean? There was Mrs. Oakum's gray and silver brocade, and Mrs. Cotton's *point-de-Venice* mantle, and Miss Prime and Miss Messe and Miss Middlings, who always dress exquisitely, and Mrs. Shinnurs Sharcke with that superb India shawl that must have cost two thousand dollars! What could be finer?

Mrs. Grey. And then Mrs. Robinson Smith, celebrated as the best-dressed woman in town. Being a connection of the family, and so a sort of hostess, she wore no bonnet; and her dress, of the richest *gros d'Afrique*, had twenty-eight pinked and scalloped flounces, alternately one of white and three of as many graduated tints of green. So elegant and distinguished!

Grey. Twenty-eight pinked and scalloped flounces of white and graduated tints of green! With her pale, sodden complexion, she must have looked like an enormous chicken-salad *mayonnaise.*

Mrs. Grey [after a brief pause]. Why, so she did! You good-for-nothing thing, you've spoiled the prettiest dress I ever saw, for me! It was quite my ideal; and now I never want to see it again.

Grey. Your ideal must have been of marvellous beauty, to admit such a comparison,—and your preference most intelligently based, to be swept away by it!

Tomes. Come, Grey, be fair. You know that merit has no immunity from ridicule.

Grey. True; but no less true that ridicule does no real harm to merit. If this Mrs. Robinson Crusoe's gown had been truly beautiful, my ridiculous comparison could not have so entirely disenchanted my wife with it;—she, mind you, being supposed (for the sake of our argument only) to be a woman of sense and taste.

Mrs. Grey. Accept my profoundest and most grateful curtsy, —on credit. It's too much trouble to rise and make it; and, to confess the truth, I can't; my foot has caught in my hoop. Help me, Laura.

[Disentanglement,—from which the gentlemen avert modest eyes, laughing the while.]

Grey. I do assure you, Nelly, that, until you leave off that monstrosity of steel and cordage, your sense and taste, so far as

costume is concerned, must be taken on credit, as well as your curtsies.

Mrs. Grey. Leave off my hoop? Would you have me look like a fright?—as slinky as if I had been drawn through a key-hole?

Miss Larches. Leave off her hoop?

Mr. Key. Be seen without a hoop? Why, what a guy a woman would look without a hoop! I suppose they do take them off at certain times, but then they are not visible to the naked eye.

Tomes. Yes, Grey,—why take off her hoop? I don't care, you know, to have hoops worn. But worn or not worn, what difference does it make?

Grey. All against me?—a fair representation of the general feeling on the momentous subject at this moment, I suppose. But ten years ago,—that's about a year after I first saw you, and a year before we were married, you remember, Nelly,—no lady wore a hoop; and had I said then that you looked like a fright, or, as Mr. Key phrases it, a guy, I should have belied my own opinion, and, I believe, given you no little pain.

Mrs. Grey. Master Presumption, I'm responsible for none of your conceited notions; and if I were, it wasn't the fashion then to wear hoops,—and to be out of the fashion is to be a fright and a guy.

Miss Larches. Yes, the fashion is always pretty.

Grey. Is it, Miss Larches? Then it must always have been pretty. Let us see. Look you all here. In this small portfolio is a collection of prints which exhibits the fashions of France, Italy,

and England, in more or less detail, for eight hundred years back.

Miss Larches. Is there? Oh, that's charming! Do let us see them!

Grey. With pleasure. But remember that I expect you to admire them all,—although I tell you that not one in ten of them is endurable, not one in fifty pretty, not one in a hundred beautiful.

Miss Larches. Why, there aren't more than two or three hundred.

Grey. About two hundred and fifty; and if you find more than two that fulfil all the conditions of beauty in costume, you will be more fortunate than I have been.

Miss Larches [*after a brief Inspection*]. Ah, Mr. Grey, how can you? Most of these are caricatures.

Grey. Nothing of the sort. All veritable costumes, I assure you. Those from 1750 down, fashion-plates; the others, portraits.

Mrs. Grey. True, Laura. I've looked at them many a time, and thought how fearfully and wonderfully dresses have been made. Not to go back to those bristling horrors of the Middle Ages and the *renaissance*, look at this ball-dress of 1810: a night-gown without sleeves, made of two breadths of pink silk, very low in the neck, and *very* short in the skirt.

Tomes. And these were our modest grandmothers, of whom we hear so much! They went rather far in their search after the beautiful.

Grey. Say, rather, in their revelation of it. That was, at

least, an honest fashion, and men who married could not well complain that they had been deceived by concealment. But that tells nothing against the modesty of our grandmothers. What is modest in dress depends entirely on what is customary; and there is an immodesty that hides, as well as one that exposes. Unconsciousness is modesty's triple shelter against shame. See here, the dissolute Marguerite of Navarre, visible only at head and hands; the former from the chin upwards, the latter from the knuckles downwards; and here, *La belle Hamilton*, rightly named, as chaste as beautiful, and so modest in her carriage that she escaped the breath of scandal even in the court of Charles II., and yet with a gown (if gown it can be called) so loose about the bust and arms that the pink night-gown would blush crimson at it.

Tomes. The ladies seem convinced, though puzzled; but that is because they don't detect your fallacy. You confound the woman and the fashion. An immodest woman may be modestly dressed; and if it is the fashion to be so, she most certainly will, unless she is able herself to set a fashion more suited to her taste. For usually a woman's care of her costume is in inverse proportion to that she takes of her character.

The Ladies [having a vague notion that "inverse proportion" means something horrible']. Mr. Tomes!

Grey. Don't misapprehend my friend Daniel. On this occasion he has come to judgment upon a subject of which he knows so little that it is worse than nothing. I have reason to believe that he has a profound respect for one of you, and, being a bachelor,

such exalted notions of your sex in general that he would not wantonly misjudge the humblest individual of it. His remark was but the fruit of such sheer innocence with regard to your charming sisterhood, that he has yet to learn that there is not a single member of it, who confesses to less than seventy years, to whom, even if she is black, deformed, and the meanest hireling household drudge, her dress, when she is to be seen of men, is not the object of a watchful solicitude at least next to that which she feels for her reputation. Among the sharpest of Douglas Jerrold's unmalicious witticisms was his saying, that Eve ate the apple that she might dress.

Mrs. Grey. Eve's daughters—two of them, at least—are inexpressibly obliged to you for your defence of the sex against the valorous Tomes. Another time, pray, leave us to our fate. But, Laura, do look here! See these hideous peaked and horned head-dresses of the fifteenth century. That one looks like an Old-Dominion coffee-pot with wings. How frightful! how uncomfortable! how inconvenient! How could the women wear such things?

Miss Larches. Perfectly ridiculous! How could they get into their carriages with those steeples on their heads? and how they must have been in the way at the opera!

Grey. Miss Larches forgets. These head-dresses, monstrous as they are, are not exposed to the objection of being inconsistent with the habits of life of those who wore them, as so many of the fashions of later periods and of the present day are.

There were no such vehicles as she is thinking of until more than a century after these stupendous head-dresses were worn, until which time ladies very rarely used even a covered wagon as a means of locomotion; and these steeple-crowned ladies, and many generations after them, had passed away before the performance of the first opera.

Miss Larches. No carriages? Why, how did they go to parties? No opera? What did they do on winter evenings when there were no parties?

Grey. They went to parties in the day-time on horseback; and on the days when there were no parties, of which there were a great many then, they gave themselves up to a very delightful mode of passing the time, when it is intelligently practised, known as staying at home.

Mr. Key. What a bore!

Grey. But don't confine your criticism of head-dresses to the fifteenth century. Look through the costumes of the three succeeding centuries, and see how often invention was taxed for artificial decorations of the head, equally elaborate and hideous. Anything but to have a head look like a head! anything but to have hair look like hair! See this lady of 1750, her hair drawn violently back from her forehead and piled up on a cushion nine inches high. She is plainly one of those lovely, warm-toned blondes whose hair is of that priceless red that makes all other tints look poor and sad; and so she defiles its exquisite texture with grease, and blanches out its wealth of color with flour.

She might have gathered its gleaming waves into a ravishing knot behind her head; but no, she has four stiff, enormous curls, noisome with a mingled smell of hot iron, musk, and ambergris, hanging like rolls of parchment from the top of her cushion to below her ear. O' top of this elevation is mounted a wreath of gaudy artificial flowers, in its turn surmounted by four vast plumes, two yellow, one pink, one blue, from the midst of which shoot up two long feathers, one green and one red, while behind hangs down a greasy, floury mass gathered at the end into a club-like handle, which has some fitness for its place, in suggesting that it should be used to jerk the heap of hair, grease, and feathers from the head of the unfortunate who sustains it. Just think of it! that sweet creature must have given up at least two hours of every day to this disfigurement of her pretty head.

Tomes. And I've no doubt she made a sensation in the ball-room or at court, in spite of all your ridicule, and so attained her purpose.

Grey. Certainly she did; for she was so beautiful in person and alluring in manner, that even that head-dress, and the accompanying costume with which she was deformed, could not eclipse her charms for those who had become at all accustomed to the absurd disguise which she assumed. But it was the woman that was beautiful, not the costume; and the woman was so beautiful, in spite of the costume, that she was able to light up even its forbidding features with the reflection of her own loveliness. There have been countless similar cases since;—there

are some now.

Mrs. Grey. Miss Larches, doubtless, appreciates the approving glance of so severe a censor.

Grey. And this head-dress *was* open to the objection which Miss Larches brought against that which preceded it three centuries. These ladies were in each other's way at the opera; and while riding there in their coaches, they were obliged to sit with their heads out of the windows.

Mrs. Grey. Their carriages must have been of great service when it rained!—But look at these stomachers, stiff with embroidery and jewels, and with points that reach half-way from the waist to the ground! See those enormous ruffs, standing out a quarter of a yard, and curving over so smoothly to their very edges! What a protection the fear of ruining those ruffs must have been against children, and—other troublesome creatures!

Grey. It is true, that ruffs and stomachers seem to indicate great propriety of conduct, including an aversion to children and —other troublesome creatures; but students of the manners and morals of the period at which those articles of dress were worn do not find that the women who wore them differed much in their conduct, at least as to the other troublesome creatures, from the women who nowadays have revived one of the most unsightly and absurd traits of the costume of which ruffs and stomachers formed a part.

Mrs. Grey. What can you mean? Our fashion like that frightful rig? Why, see this portrait of Queen Elizabeth in full dress! What

with stomacher and pointed waist and fardingale, and sticking in here and sticking out there, and ruffs and cuffs and ouches and jewels and puckers, she looks like a hideous flying insect with expanded wings, seen through a microscope,—not at all like a woman.

Grey. And her costume is rivalled, if not outdone, by that of her critic, in the very peculiarity by which she is made to look most unlike a woman;—the straight line of the waist and the swelling curve below it, which meet in such a sharp, unmitigated angle. Look at the Venus yonder,—she is naked to the hips,—and see how utterly these lines misrepresent those of Nature. You will find no instance of such a contour as is formed by the meeting of these lines among all living creatures, except, perhaps, when a turtle thrusts his head and his tail out of his shell.

Miss Larches. But there's a vase with just such an outline, that I have heard you admire a hundred times.

Grey. True, Miss Larches; but a woman is not a vase;—more beautiful even than this, certainly more precious, perhaps almost as fragile, but still not a vase; and she shows as little taste in making herself look like a vase as some potters do in making vases that look like women.

Mr. Key. But I thought it was decided that the female figure below the shoulders should be left to the imagination. Does Mr. Grey propose to substitute the charming reality of undisguised Nature?

Grey. True, we do not attempt to define the female figure

below the waist, at least; but although we may safely veil or even conceal Nature, we cannot misrepresent or outrage her, except at the cost of utter loss of beauty. The lines of drapery, or of any article of dress, must conform to those of that part of the figure which it conceals, or the effect will be deforming, monstrous.

Mr. Key. Does Mr. Grey mean, to say that ladies nowadays' look monstrous and deformed?

Grey. To a certain extent they do. But such is the influence of habit upon the eye, that we fully apprehend the effect of such incongruity as that of which I spoke only in the costumes of past generations, or when there is a very violent, instead of a gradual change in the fashion of our own day. Look at these full-length portraits of Catherine de Médicis and the Princess Marguerite, daughter of Francis the First.

The Ladies. What frights!

Mrs. Grey. No, not both; Marguerite's dress is pretty, in spite of those horrid sleeves sticking up so above her shoulders.

Grey. You are right. Those sleeves, rising above the shoulders —as high as the ear in Catherine's costume, you will observe —are unsightly enough to nullify whatever beauty the costume might have in other points; though in her case they only complete the expression of the costume, which is a grim, unnatural stiffness. And the reason of the unsightliness of these sleeves is, that the outline which they present is directly opposed to that of Nature. No human shoulders bulge upward into great hemispherical excrescences nine inches high; and the peculiar

sexual characteristic of this part of woman's figure is the gentle downward curve by which the lines of the shoulder pass into those of the arm. Our memory that such is the natural configuration of these parts enters, consciously or unconsciously, into our judgment of this costume, in which we see that Nature is deliberately departed from; and our condemnation of it in this particular respect is strengthened by the perception, at a glance, that great pains have been taken to make its outlines discordant with those of the part which they conceal. You qualified your censure of Marguerite's dress partly because, in her case, the slope of the shoulder is preserved until the very junction of the arm with the bust, and partly because her bust and waist are defined by her gown with a tolerably near approach to Nature, instead of being entirely concealed, as in the case of her sister-in-law, by stiff lines sloping outward on all sides to the ground, making the remorseless Queen look like an enormous extinguisher with a woman's head set on it. And these advantages of form in the Princess's costume are enhanced by its presentation of a fine contrast of rich color in unbroken masses, instead of the Queen's black velvet and white satin elaborately disfigured with embroidery, ermine, lace, and jewels. You were prompt in your condemnation of the fashion to which your eye had not been accustomed: now turn to the costume that you wear, and which you are in a manner compelled to wear; for I am not so visionary as to expect a woman, or even a man under sixty, to fly directly in the face of fashion, although her extravagant

caprices may be gracefully disregarded by both sexes and all ages. Here are two fashion-plates of the last month,—[1] not magazine caricatures, mind you, or anything like it,—but from the first *modistes* in Paris. Look at that shawled lady, with her back toward us. If you did not know that that is a shawl, and that the thing which surmounts it is a bonnet, you would not suspect the figure to be human. See; there is a slightly undulating slope at an angle of about sixty-five degrees from the crown of the head to the lowest hem of the skirt, so that the outline is that of a pyramid slightly rounded at the apex, and nearly as broad across the base as it is high. What is there of woman in such a figure? And this evening-dress; it suggests the enchantments in the stories of the Dark Ages, where knights encounter women who are women to the breasts and monsters below. From the head to as far as halfway down the waist, this figure is natural.

Mr. Key. Under the circumstances it could hardly be otherwise. *Au naturel*, I should call it, except for the spice of a few flowers and a little lace.

Grey. But from that point it begins to lose its semblance to a woman's shape, (as you will see by raising your eyes again to the Venus,) and after running two or three inches decidedly inward in a straight line, where it should turn outward with a gentle curve, its outlines break into a sharp angle, and it expands, with a sudden hyperbolical curve, into a monstrous and nameless figure that is not only unlike Nature, but has no relations whatever with

[1] March, 1869.

Nature. The eye needs no cultivation, the brain no instruction, to perceive that such an outline cannot be produced by drapery upon a woman's form. It is clear, at a glance, that there is an artificial structure underneath that swelling skirt; that a scaffold, a framework, has been erected to support that dome of silk; and that the wearer is merely an automatic machine by which it is made to perambulate. A woman in this rig hangs in her skirts like a clapper in a bell; and I never meet one without being tempted to take her by the neck and ring her.

Mr. Key. Those belles like ringing well enough, but not exactly of that kind.

Grey. The costume is also faulty in two other most important respects: it is without pure, decided color of any tint, but is broken into patches and blotches of various mongrel hues,–

Mrs. Grey. Hear the man! that exquisite brocade!

Grey.–and whatever effect it might otherwise have had, of form or color, would be entirely frittered away by the multitudinous and multiform trimmings with which it is bedizened; and it is without a girdle of any kind.

Mrs. Grey. Oh, sweet Simplicity, hear and reward thy priest and prophet! What would your Highness have the woman wear? —a white muslin gown, with a blue sash, and a rose in her hair? That style went out on the day that Mesdames Shem, Ham, and Japhet left the ark.

Grey. And well it might,—for evening-dress, at least No,—my taste, or, if you will permit me to say it, good taste, craves rich

colors, and ample, flowing lines,—colors which require taste to be shown in their arrangement and adaptation, and forms which show invention and knowledge in their design. Your woman who dresses in white, and your man who wears plain black, are safe from impeachment of their taste, just as people who say nothing are secure against an exhibition of folly or ignorance. They are the mutes of costume, and contribute nothing to the chromatic harmony of the social circle. They succeed in nothing but the avoidance of positive offence.

Miss Larches. Pray, then, Mr. Grey, what—shall—we—do? You have condemned enough, and told us what is wrong; can't you find in all this collection a single costume that is positively beautiful? and can't you tell us what is right, as well as what is wrong?

Grey. Both,—and will. The first, at once; the last, if you continue to desire it. Here are two costumes, quite unlike in composition and effect, and yet both beautiful;—the first, the fashions of 1811 and 1812 (for the variations, during that time, were so trifling, and in such unessential particulars, that the costume had but one character, as you will see by comparing the twenty-four plates for those years); the second, that worn by this peasant-girl of Normandy. Look first at the fashion-plates, and see the adaptation of that beautiful gown to all the purposes for which a gown is intended. How completely it clothes the entire figure, and with what ease and comfort to the wearer! There is not a line about it which indicates compression, or one expressive

of that looseness and languishing abandonment that we remarked just now in the costume of *La belle Hamilton*. The entire person is concealed, except the tip of one foot, the hands, the head and throat, and just enough of the bust to confess the existence of its feminine charms, without exposing them; both limbs and trunk are amply draped; and yet how plainly it can be seen that there is a well-developed, untortured woman underneath those tissues! The waist, girdled in at the proper place, neither just beneath the breasts, as it was a few years before and after, nor just above the hips, as it has been for many years past, and as it was three hundred years ago, is of its natural size:—compare it with the Venus, and then look at those cruel cones, thrust, point downward, into mounds of silk and velvet, to which women adapted themselves about 1575, 1750, and 1830, and thence, with little mitigation, to the present day. How expressive the lines of one figure are of health, and grace, and bounteous fulness of life! and how poor, and sickly, and mean, and man-made the other creatures seem! See, too, in the former, that all the wearer's limbs are as free as air; she can even clasp her hands, with arms at full-length, above her head. Queen Bess, yonder, could do many things, but she could not do that; neither could your great-great-grandmothers, ladies, if they were people of the least pretensions to fashion, nor your mothers. Can you?

[*Mrs. Grey, presuming upon her demi-toilette, with a look of arch defiance, lifts her hands quickly up above her head; but before they have approached each other, there is a sharp sound,*

as of rending and snapping; and, with a sudden flush and a little scream, she subsides into her crinoline.]

Miss Larches. Why, you foolish creature! you might have known you couldn't.

Mr. Key. A most ignominious failure! Mr. Grey, you had better announce a course of lectures on costume, with illustrations from the life. Your subjects will cost you nothing.

Grey. Except for silk- and mantua-making. I have no doubt that I could make such a course useful, and Mrs. Grey has shown that she could make it amusing. But we can get on very well as we are. Observe this figure again. Its chief beauty is, that the gown has, or seems to have, *no form of its own*; it adapts itself to the person, and, while that is entirely concealed, falls round it in lines of exquisite grace and softness, upon which the eye rests with untiring pleasure, and which, upon every movement of the wearer, must change only for others also beautiful. Notice also, that, although the gown forms an ample drapery, it yet follows the contour of the figure sufficiently to taper gracefully to the feet at the front, where it touches the floor lightly, and presents, as it should, the narrowest diameter of the whole figure,—not, contrary to Nature, (I beg pardon of your *modistes*, ladies,) the widest.

Tomes. You needn't apologize so ceremoniously to the ladies; for you've involved yourself in a flagrant contradiction. You said that these two costumes were equally beautiful; and here's the lady of 1812 with her dress all clinging in little wrinkles round

her feet, while the peasant-girl's frock is wider at the bottom than it is anywhere else.

Grey. A most profound and logical objection, 0 Daniel! which in due time shall be considered. But I am not now to be diverted from two other very important elements of the beauty of these costumes of 1811 and 1812. They are in one or two, or, at most, three colors,—the tissues of the gowns, the outer garments, (when they are worn,) and the bonnets or head-dresses being of one unbroken tint; and they are almost entirely free from trimming, which appears only upon the principal seams and the edges of the garments, and then in very moderate quantity, though of rich quality.

Miss Larches. Why, so it is! I should not have noticed that.

Grey. You did not notice the lack of it, because it is not required to make the dress complete or give it character. It is only the presence of trimming that attracts attention; its absence is never felt in a well-designed costume.—Now turn to my pretty peasant-girl, who, although she is not in full holiday-costume, is unmistakably "dressed," as ladies call it; for we see that she is going to some slight merry-making, as she carries in her hands the shoes which are to cover those stockingless feet. She, too, is entirely at her ease and unconscious of her costume, except for a shy suspicion that it becomes her, and she, it. Her waist is of its natural size and in its proper place. Her shoulders are covered, and her arms have free play; and although her bodice is cut rather low, the rising chemise and the falling kerchief redeem it from

all objection on that score.

Tomes. But how about the length, or rather the shortness, of that skirt? It seems to me to cry *excelsior* to the pink night-gown.

Grey. You are implacable as to this poor girl's petticoats. Don't you see that her arms are bare? and yet you make no objection. Now, a woman has legs as well as arms; and why, if it be the custom, should not one be seen as well as the other? That girl's grandmothers, to the tenth degree of greatness, wore skirts of just that length from their childhood to their dying day; and why should not she? She would as soon think of hiding her nose as her ankle; and why should she not? Besides, as you will see, her gown is not shorter than those our grandmothers wore, or our mothers, twenty-eight or thirty years ago; and that they were modest, which of us will deny? And now as to the width of these skirts. You will see that they reach only a little below the calf of the leg, and therefore it is both impossible and undesirable that they should fall so closely round the figure as in the case of the fashionable gowns of 1812 that we were just examining. And besides, in the case of our peasant-girl, we see that the lines of her gown are determined by the outline of her figure; and we also see her feet and the lower part of her legs. Her humanity is not extinguished, her means of locomotion are visible;—but in looking at a lady nowadays, we see nothing of the kind; from the waist down, she is a puzzle of silk and conic sections, a marvellous machine that moves in a mysterious way. See, again, how beautiful in color this peasant's costume is. The gown of a

rich red, not glaring, but yet positive and pure; the apron, blue; she is a brunette, and so has wisely chosen to have that enviable little shawl or kerchief, the ends of which reach but just below her waist, of yellow; while that high head-dress, quaint and graceful, that serves her for a bonnet, and in fact is one, is of tender green.

Miss Larches. She is not troubled with trimming.

Grey. Not troubled with it; but she has it just where it should be,—on the bottom of her gown, which is edged with black,—in the flowered border of her kerchief,—on the edge of her bonnet, where there is a narrow line of yellow,—and in the lace or muslin ruffle of the cape which falls from it If she were a queen, or the wife of a Russian prince who owned thousands of girls like her, she might have trimming of greater cost and beauty, but not a shred more without deterioration of her costume, which, if she were court-lady to Eugenie and had the court-painter to help her, could not be in better taste.

Mrs. Grey. But, Stanford, don't you see? (just like a man!) you are charmed with these women, not with their dresses. These fashion-plates of fifty years ago are designed by very different hands from those which produce our niminy-piminy looking things,—by artists plainly; and your peasant-girl was seized upon by some errant knight of palette and brush, and painted for her beauty. These women are what you men call fine creatures. Their limbs are rounded and shapely, their figures full and lithe; they are what I've heard you say Homer calls Briseïs.

Grey. White-armed, deep-bosomed?

Mrs. Grey. Yes; and their necks rise from their shoulders like ivory towers. Any costume will look beautiful on such women. But how are poor, puny, ill-made women to dress in such fashions? They could not wear those dresses without exhibiting all those personal defects which our present fashion conceals. It's all very fine for perfectly beautiful women to have such fashions; but it's very cruel to those who are not beautiful. Don't you remember, at Mrs. Clarkson's party, just before we were married, you, and half a dozen other men just like you, went round raving about Mrs. Horn, and how elegantly she was dressed? and when I saw her, I found she had on only a plain pale-blue silk dress, that couldn't have cost a penny more than twelve shillings a yard, and not a thing beside. All the women were turning up their noses at her.

Grey. Because all the men were ready to bend down their heads to her?

Mrs. Grey. Yes.—No.—The upshot of it was, that the woman had the figure and complexion of Hebe, and this dress showed it and set it off; but the dress was nothing particular in itself.

Grey. That is, I suppose, it was not particularly fanciful or costly;—no detriment to its beauty. But as to the beauty of these costumes depending on the beauty of the women who wear them, and their unsuitableness to the needs of women who are without beauty,—It is undeniably true, that, to be beautiful in any costume, a woman must be—beautiful. This may be very cruel, but there is no help for it. Color may enhance the beauty

of complexion, as in the case of Mrs. Horn's blue dress; but as to form and material, the most elaborate, the most costly, even the most beautiful costume ever devised, cannot make the woman that wears it be other than she is, or seem so, except to people who do not look at her, but at her clothes. What did all the ugly women in 1811 and '12 do? and what have all the ugly peasant-girls in Normandy done for hundreds of years past? Do you suppose that their beautiful costume made them look any uglier than ugly women do now and here? Not a whit. Ugliness may be covered, but it cannot be concealed. And does the fashion of our day so kindly veil the personal defects in the interest of which you plead? At parties I have thought differently, and sorrowed for the owners of arms and busts and shoulders that inexorable fashion condemns on such occasions to an exposure which, to say the least, is in many cases needless. No,—by flying in the face of fashion, a woman attracts attention to her person, which can be done with impunity only by the beautiful; but do you not see that an ugly woman, by conforming to fashion, obtains no advantage over other women, ugly or beautiful, who also conform to it? and consequently, that a set fashion for all rigidly preserves the contrasts of unequally developed Nature? If there were no fashion to which all felt that they must conform at peril of singularity, then, indeed, there would be some help for the unfortunate; for each individual might adopt a costume suited to his or her peculiarities of person. Yet, even then, there could only be a mitigation or humoring of blemishes, not a remedy for them.

There is no way of making deformity or imperfection beautiful.

Mrs. Grey. But, Stanford, there are times when–

Grey. There are no times when woman's figure has not the charm of womanhood, unless she attempts to improve it by some monstrous contrivance of her own; no times when good taste and womanly tact cannot so drape it that it will possess some attraction peculiar to her sex. And were it not so, how irrational, how wrongful is it to extinguish, I will not say the beauty, but, in part, the very humanity of all women, at all times, for the sake of hiding for some women the sign of their perfected womanhood at certain times!

Mr. Key. It certainly results in most astonishing surprises. In fact, I was quite stultified the other day, when Mrs. Novamater, who only a week before had been out yachting with me–

Mrs. Grey. Declined going again. That was not strange. I fear that you did not take good care of her.

Mr. Key. I was not as tender of her as I might have been; but it was her fault, or that of my ignorance,—not really mine. But, Mr. Grey, why can't you boil all this talk down into an essay, or a paper, as you call it, for the "Oceanic"? You promised Miss Larches something of the sort just now. *Miss Larches*. Yes, Mr. Grey, do let us have it. We ladies would so like to have some masculine rules to dress by!

Tomes. Don't confine your endeavors to one sex. Think what an achievement it would be to teach me how to dress!

Grey. Unanimous, even in your irony! for I see that Mrs.

Grey looks quizzical expectation. Well, I will. In fact, I'm as well prepared as a man whose health is drunk at a dinner given to him, and who is unexpectedly called upon for a speech,—or as Rosina, when Figaro begs for *un biglietio* to Almaviva. [*Opens a drawer*.] *Eccolo quà*! Here is something not long enough or elaborate enough to be called an essay nowadays, though it might have borne the name in Bacon's time. I will read it to you. I call it

THE RUDIMENTS OF DRESS

To dress the body is to put it into a right, proper, and becoming external condition. Comfort and decency are to be sought first in dress; next, fitness to the person and the condition of the wearer; last, beauty of form and color, and richness of material. But the last object is usually made the first, and thus all are perilled and often lost; for that which is not comfortable or decent or suitable cannot be completely beautiful. The two chief requisites of dress are easily attained. Only a sufficiency of suitable covering is necessary to them; and this varies according to climate and custom. The Hottentot has them both in his strip of cloth; the Esquimau, in his double case of skins over all except face and fingers;—the most elegant Parisian, the most prudish Shakeress, has no more.

The two principal objects of covering the body being so easily attainable, the others are immediately, almost simultaneously sought; and dress rises at the outset into one of those mixed arts which seek to combine the useful and the beautiful, and which thus hold a middle place between mechanic art and fine art. But of these mixed arts, dress is the lowest and the least important: the lowest, because perfection in it is most easily arrived at,—being within the reach of persons whose minds are uninformed and frivolous, whose souls are sensual and grovelling, and whose taste has little culture,—as in the case of many American,

and more French women, who have had a brief experience of metropolitan life: the least important, because it has no intellectual or even emotional significance, and is thus without the slightest aesthetic purpose, having for its end (as an art) only the transient, sensuous gratification of an individual, or, at most, of the comparatively few persons by whom he may be seen in the course of not more than a single day; for every renovation of the dress is, in its kind, a new work of Art. As men emerge from the savage state and acquire mechanic skill, the distaff, the spindle, and the loom produce the earliest fruits of their advancement, and dress is the first decorative art in which they reach perfection. Indeed, it may be doubted whether the most beautiful articles of clothing, the most tasteful and comfortable costumes, have not been produced by people who are classed as barbarous, or, at best, as half-civilized. What fabrics surpass the shawls of India in tint or texture? What garment is more graceful or more serviceable than the Mexican *poncho*, or the Peruvian *rebozo*? What Frenchman is so comfortably or so beautifully dressed as a wealthy unsophisticated Turk? There seems to be an instinct about dress, which, joined to the diffusion of wealth and the reduced price of all textile fabrics, has caused it to be no longer any criterion of culture, social position, breeding, or even taste, except as regards itself.

Dress has, however, some importance in its relations to society and to the individual. It is always indicative of the temper of the time. This is notably true of the wanton ease of the costume

of Charles the Second, and the meretricious artificiality of that of the middle of the last century. And in the deliberate double-skirted costliness of the female fashions of our own day,—fashions not intended for courts or wealthy aristocracies, but for everybody,—contrasted as they are with the sober-hued and unpretending habits which all men wear, and in which little more is sought than comfort and convenience, we have an expression of the laborious and the lavish spirit of the times,—the right hand gathering with painful, unremitting toil, the left scattering with splendid recklessness. Dress has an appreciable effect upon the mental condition of individuals, whatever their gravity or intelligence. There are few men not far advanced in years, and still fewer women, who do not feel more confidence in themselves, perhaps more self-respect, for the consciousness of being well-dressed, or, rather, when the knowledge that they are well-dressed relieves them of all consciousness upon the subject. To decide upon the costume which can secure this serene self-satisfaction is impossible. For to excellence in dress there are positive and relative conditions. A man cannot be positively well-dressed, whose costume does not suit the peculiarities of his person and position,—or relatively, whose exterior does not sufficiently conform to the fashion of his day (unless that should be very monstrous and ridiculous) to escape remark for eccentricity. The question is, therefore, complicated with the consideration of individual peculiarities and the fashion of the day, which are unknown and variable elements. But maxims of

general application can be laid down, to which both fashions and individuals must conform at peril consequent upon violation of the laws of reason and beauty.

The comfort and decency needful to dress—the Esquimau's double case of skins and the Hottentot's *cumberbund*—need not be insisted on; for maxims are not made for idiots. But dress should not only secure these points, but seem to secure them; for, as to others than the wearer of a dress, what difference is there between shivering and seeming to shiver, sweltering and seeming to swelter?

Convenience, which is to be distinguished from mere bodily comfort, is the next essential of becoming dress. A man should not go partridge-shooting in a Spanish cloak; a woman should not enter an omnibus, that must carry twelve inside, with her skirts so expanded by steel ribs that the vehicle can comfortably hold but four of her,—or do the honors of a table in hanging-sleeves that threaten destruction to cups and saucers, and take toll of gravy from every dish that passes them. Hoops, borrowed by bankrupt invention from a bygone age to satisfy craving fickleness, suited the habits of their first wearers, who would as soon have swept the streets as driven through them, packed thirteen to the dozen, in a carriage common to every passenger who could pay six cents; and hanging-sleeves were fit for women who, instead of serving others, were served themselves by pages on the knee. No beauty of form or splendor of material in costume can compensate for manifest inconvenience to the wearer. It is partly from an

intuitive recognition of this truth, that a gown which opens before seems, and is, more beautiful than one that opens behind. The lady's maid is invisible.

No dress is tolerable, by good taste, which does not permit, and seem to permit, the easy performance of any movement proper to the wearer's age and condition in life. Such a costume openly defies the first law of the mixed arts,—fitness. Thus, the dress of children should be simple, loose, and, whatever the condition of their parents, inexpensive. Let them not, girls or boys, except on rare, formal occasions, be tormented with the toilette. Give them clean skins, twice a day; and, for the rest, clothes that will protect them from the weather as they exercise their inalienable right to roll upon the grass and play in the dirt, and which it will trouble no one to see torn or soiled. Do this, if you have a prince's revenue,—unless you would be vulgar. For, although you may be able to afford to cast jewels into the mire or break the Portland vase for your amusement, if you do so, you are a Goth. Jewels were not made for the mire, vases to be broken, or handsome clothes to be soiled and torn.

Next to convenience is fitness to years and condition in life. A man can as soon, by taking thought, add a cubit to his stature as a woman take five years from her appearance by "dressing young." The attempt to make age look like youth only succeeds in depriving age of its peculiar and becoming beauty, and leaving it a bloated or a haggard sham.—Conditions of life have no political recognition, with us, yet they none the less exist. They

are not higher and lower; they are different. The distinction between them is none the less real, that it is not written down, and they are not labelled. Reason and taste alike require that this difference should have outward expression. The abandonment of distinctive professional costume is associated with a movement of social progress, and so cannot be arrested; but it is much to be deplored in its effect upon the beauty, the keeping, and the harmonious contrast of external life.

Of the absolute beauty of dress form is the most important element, as it is of all arts which appeal to the eye. The lines of costume should, in every part, conform to those of Nature, or be in harmony with them. "Papa," said a little boy, who saw his father for the first time in complete walking-costume, "what a high hat! Does your head go up to the top of it?" The question touched the cardinal point of form in costume. Unbroken, flowing lines are essential to the beauty of dress; and fixed angles are monstrous, except where Nature has placed them, at the junction of the limbs with the trunk. The general outlines of the figure should be indicated; and no long garment which flows from the shoulders downward is complete without a girdle.[2]

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[2] *Mr. Grey* [*in parenthesis, and by way of illustration*]. The fashion for ladies' full dress during several years, and but recently abandoned, with its straight line cutting pitilessly across the rounded forms of the shoulders and bust, and making women seem painfully squeezed upward out of their gowns,—its *berthe*, concealing both the union of the arms with the trunk and the flowing lines of that part of the person, and adding another discordant straight line (its lower edge) to the costume,—its long,

As to distinctive forms of costume for the sexes, long robes, concealing the person from the waist to considerably below the knee, are required by the female figure, if only to veil certain inherent defects,—if those peculiarities may be called defects, which adapt it to its proper functions and do not diminish its sexual attractiveness. Woman's figure having its centre of gravity low, its breadth at the hip great, and, from the smallness of her feet, its base narrow, her natural movement in a costume which does not conceal the action of the hip and knee-joints is unavoidably awkward, though none the less attractive to the eye of the other sex.[3]

In color, the point of next importance, no fine effects of costume are to be attained without broad masses of pure and positive tints. These, however, may be enlivened with condimental garniture of broken and combined colors. But dresses striped, or, yet worse, plaided or checkered, are atrocious violations of good taste; indeed, party-colored costumes are worthy only of the fools and harlequins to whose official habits they were once set apart. The three primary, and the

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ungirdled waist, wrought into peaks before and behind, and its gathered swell below, is an instance in point, of utter disregard of Nature and deliberate violation of harmony, and the consequent attainment of discord and absurdity in every particular. It is rivalled only by the dress-coat, which, with quite unimportant variations, has been worn by gentlemen for fifty years. The collar of this, when stiff and high, quite equals the *berthe* in absurdity and ugliness; and the useless skirt is the converse in monstrosity to the hooped petticoat.

[3] For instance, the movements of ballet-dancers, except the very artificial ones of the feet and hands.

three secondary colors, red, yellow, and blue, orange, green, and purple, (though not in their highest intensity,) afford the best hues for costume, and are inexhaustible in their beautiful combinations. White and black have, in themselves, no costumal character; but they may be effectively used in combination with other colors. The various tints of so-called brown, that we find in Nature, may be employed with fine effect; but other colors, curiously sought out and without distinctive hue, have little beauty in themselves; and any richness of appearance which they may present is almost always due to the fabric to which they are imparted. Colors have harmonies and discords, like sounds, which must be carefully observed in composing a costume. Perception of these cannot be taught, more than perception of harmony in music; but, if possessed, it may be cultivated.

Extrinsic ornament or trimming should be avoided, except to indicate completeness, as at a hem,—or to blend forms and colors, as soft lace at the throat or wrists. The essential beauty of costume is in its fitness, form, and color; and the effect of this beauty may be entirely frittered away by trimmings. These, however costly, are in themselves mere petty accessories to dress; and the use of them, except to define its chief terminal outlines, or soften their infringement upon the flesh, is a confession of weakness in the main points of the costume, and an indication of a depraved and trivial taste. When used, they should have beauty in themselves, which is attainable only by a clearly marked design. Thus, the exquisite delicacy of fabric in some

kinds of lace does not compensate for the blotchy confusion of the shapeless flower-patterns worked upon it. Not that lace or any other ornamental fabric should imitate exactly the forms of flowers or other natural objects, but that the conventional forms should be beautiful in themselves and clearly traced in the pattern.—Akin to trimmings are all other appendages to dress,—jewels, or humbler articles; and as every part of dress should have a function, and fulfil it, and seem to do so, and should not seem to do that which it does not, these should never be worn unless they serve a useful purpose,—as a brooch, a button, a chain, a signet or guard ring,—or have significance,—as a wedding-ring, an epaulet, or an order.[4] But the brooch and the button must fasten, the chain suspend, the ring bear a device, or they sink into pretentious, vulgar shams. And there must be keeping between these articles and their offices. To use, for instance, a massive golden, or, worse, gilded chain to support a cheap silver watch is to reverse the order of reason and good taste.

The human head is the most beautiful object in Nature. It needs a covering at certain times; but to decorate it is superfluous; and any decoration, whether of flowers, or jewels, or the hair itself, that distorts its form or is in discord with its outlines, is an abomination.

Perfumes are hardly a part of dress; yet, as an addition to

[4] Thus, it is the office of a bonnet or a hat to protect the head and face; and so a sun-shade carried by the wearer of a bonnet is a confession that the bonnet is a worthless thing, worn only for show: but an umbrella is no such confession; because it is not the office of the hat or bonnet to shelter the whole person from sun or rain.

it often made, they merit censure, with slight exception, as deliberate contrivances to attract attention to the person, by appealing to the lowest and most sensuous of the senses. Next to no perfume at all, a faint odor of roses, or of lavender, obtained by scattering the leaves of those plants in clothes-presses, or of the very best Cologne-water, is most pleasant.

In its general expression, dress should be cheerful and enlivening, but, at least in the case of adults, not inconsistent with thoughtful earnestness. There is a radical and absurd incongruity between the real condition and the outward seeming of a man or woman who knows what life is, and purposes to discharge its duties, enjoy its joys, and bear its sorrows, and who is clad in a trivial, grotesque, or extravagant costume.—These, then, are the elementary requisites of dress: that it be comfortable and decent, convenient and suitable, beautiful in form and color, simple, genuine, harmonious with Nature and itself.

* * * * *

Mrs. Grey. All very fine, and, doubtless, very true, as well as sententious and profound. But hark you, Mr. Wiseman, to something not dreamt of in your philosophy! We women dress, not to be simple, genuine, and harmonious, or even to please you men, but to brave each other's criticism; and so, when the time comes to get our Fall things, Laura and I will go and ask what is the fashion, and wear what is the fashion, in spite of you and

your rudiments and elements.

Grey. I expected nothing else; and, indeed, I am not sure that in your present circumstances I should desire you to do otherwise, or, at most, to deviate more than slightly from the prevailing mode toward such remote points as simplicity, genuineness, and harmony. But if you were to set the fashion instead of following it, I should hope for better things.

Mrs. Grey. Fall things?

Tomes. But society has little to hope for from you, who would brand callings and conditions with a distinctive costume. That was a part of the essay that surprised me much. For the mere sake of a picturesque variety, would you perpetuate the degradation of labor, the segregation of professions, and set up again one of the social barriers between man and man? Your doctrine is fitter for Hindostan than for America. This uniformity of costume, of which you complain, is the great outward and visible sign of the present political, and future social, equality of the race.

Grey. You forget that the essay expressly recognizes, not only the connection between social progress and the abandonment of distinction in professional costume, but admits, perhaps somewhat hastily, that it cannot be arrested, and deplores it only on the score of the beauty and fitness of external life. If we must give up social progress or variety of costume, who could doubt which to choose? But I do not hesitate to assert that this uniform phase of costume is not a logical consequence of social advancement, that it is the result of vanity and petty

pride, and in its spirit at variance with the very doctrine of equality, irrespective of occupation or condition, from which it seems to spring. For the carpenter, the smith, the physician, the lawyer, who, when not engaged in his calling, makes it a point not to be known as belonging to it, contemns it and puts it to open shame; and so this endeavor of all men to dress on every possible occasion in a uniform style unsuited to labor, so far from elevating labor, degrades it, and demoralizes the laborer. This is exemplified every day, and especially on Sunday, when nine-tenths of our population do all in their power, at cost of cash and stretch of credit, at sacrifice of future comfort and present self-respect and peace of mind, to look as unlike their real selves On other days as possible. Our very maid-servants, who were brought up shoeless, stockingless, and bonnetless, and who work day and night for a few dollars a month, spend those dollars in providing themselves with hoops, flounced silk dresses, and variegated bonnets for Sunday wearing.

Tomes. Do you grudge the poor creatures their holiday and their holiday-dress?

Grey. Far from it! Let them, let us all, have more holidays, and holiday-dresses as beautiful as may be. But I cannot see why a holiday-dress should be so entirely unlike the dress they wear on other days. I have a respect as well as an admiration for the white-capped, bonnetless head of the French maid, which I cannot feel for my own wife's nurse, when I meet her flaunting along the streets on Sunday afternoon in a bonnet which is a cheap and

vulgar imitation of that which my wife wears, and really like it only in affording no protection to her head, and requiring huge pins to keep it in the place where a bonnet is least required. I have seen a farmer, whose worth, intelligence, and manly dignity found fitting expression in the dress that he daily wore, sacrifice this harmonious outward seeming in an hour, and sink into insignificance, if not vulgarity, by putting on a dress-coat and a shiny stove-pipe hat to go to meeting or to "York." A dress-coat and a fashionable hat are such hideous habits in themselves, that he must be unmistakably a man bred to wearing them, and on whom they sit easily, if not a well-looking and distinguished man, who can don them with impunity, especially if we have been accustomed to see him in a less exacting costume.

Mr. Key. The very reason why every man will, at sacrifice of his comfort and his last five dollars, exercise his right to wear them whenever he can do so. But your idea of a beautiful costume, Mr. Grey, seems to be a blue, red, or yellow bag, or bolster-case, drawn over the head, mouth downwards, with a hole in the middle of the bottom for the neck and two at the corners for the arms, and bound about the waist with a cord; for I observe that you insist upon a girdle.

Grey. I don't scout your pattern so much as you probably expected. Costumes worse in every respect have been often worn.—And the girdle? Is it not, in female dress, at least, the most charming accessory of costume? that which most defines the peculiar beauties of woman's form? that to which

the tenderest associations cling? Its knot has ever had a sweet significance that makes it sacred. What token could a lover receive that he would prize so dearly as the girdle whose office he has so often envied? "That," cries Waller,—

> "That which her slender waist confin'd
> Shall now my joyful temples bind.
> * * * * *
> Give me but what this ribbon bound,
> Take all the rest the sun goes round."

Have women taste? and can they put off this cestus with which the least attractive of them puts on some of Venus's beauty? Have they sentiment? and can they discard so true a type of their tender power that its mere lengthening makes every man their servant?

Tomes. Your bringing up the poets to your aid reminds me that you have the greatest of them against you, as to the importance of richness in dress. What do you say to Shakespeare's "Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, but not expressed in fancy"?

Grey. That it is often quoted as Shakespeare's advice in dress by people who know nothing else that he wrote, and who would have his support for their extravagance, when, in fact, we do not know what Shakespeare would have thought upon the subject, had he lived now. It is the advice of a worldly-minded old courtier to his son, given as a mere prudential maxim, at a time when, to make an impression and get on at court, a man had need to be richly dressed. That need has entirely passed away.

Miss Larches. But, Mr. Grey, I remember your finding fault with the powder on the head-dress of that *marquise* costume, because it concealed the red hair of the wearer. In such a case I should consider powder a blessing. Do you really admire red hair?

Grey. When it is beautiful, I do, and prefer it to that of any other tint. I don't mean golden hair, or flaxen, or yellow, but red,—the color of dark red amber, or, nearer yet, of freshly cut copper. There is ugly red hair, as there is ugly hair of black and brown, and every other hue. It is not the mere name of the color of the hair that makes it beautiful or not, but its tint and texture. I have seen black hair that was hideous to the sight and repulsive to the touch,—other, also black, that charmed the eyes and wooed the fingers. Fashion has asserted herself even in this particular. There have been times when the really fortunate possessor of such brown tresses as Miss Larches's would have been deemed unfortunate. No troubadour would have sung her praises; or if he did, he would either have left her hair unpraised, or else lied and called it golden, meaning red, as we know by the illuminated books of the Middle Ages. Had she lived in Venice, that great school of color, two or three hundred years ago, in the days of Titian and Giorgione, its greatest masters, she would probably have sat upon a balcony with her locks drawn through a crownless broad-brimmed hat, and covered with dye, to remove some of their rich chestnut hue, and substitute a reddish tinge; —just as this lady is represented as doing in this Venetian book

of costumes of that date.

Key. Oh that two little nephews of mine, that the boys call Carroty Bill and Brickdust Ben, were here! How these comfortable words would edify them!

Grey. I'm afraid not, if they understood me, or the poets, who, as well as the painters, are with me, Horace's Pyrrha had red hair,—

> "Cui flavam religas comam
> Simplex munditiis?"

which, if Tomes will not be severely critical, I will translate,—

> "For whom bind'st back thy amber hair
> In neat simplicity?"

Mrs. Grey. The poets are always raving about neat simplicity, or something else that is not the fashion. I suppose they sustain you in your condemnation of perfumes, too.

Tomes. There I'm with Grey,—and the poets, too, I think.

Mrs. Grey. What say you, Mr. Key?

Tomes. At least, Grey, [*turning to him*,] Plautus says, "*Mulier recte olet ubi nihil olet*" which you may translate for the ladies, if you choose. I always distrust a woman steeped in perfumes upon the very point as to which she seeks to impress me favorably.

Grey [*as if to himself and Tomes*]—

"Still to be powder'd, still perfum'd,
Lady, it is to be presum'd,
Though Art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound."

Mrs. Grey. What is that you are having to yourselves, there?

Grey. Only a verse or two *à-propos* from rare Ben.

Mrs. Grey. What do poets know about dress, even when they are poetesses? Look at your friend, the authoress of the "Willow Wreath." What a spook that woman is! Where does she get those dresses? I've often wondered—

* * * * *

Here the glass door opened, and a neat, fresh-looking maid-servant said, "Please, Ma'am, dinner is served."

Grey. Dinner! Have we been talking here two mortal hours? You'll all stop, of course: don't think of declining. Nelly blushes, yonder, doubtful, on "hospitable thoughts intent," I don't believe "our general mother," though she had Eden for her larder, heard Adam announce the Archangel's unexpected visit about dinner-time without a momentary qualm as to whether the peaches would go round twice. There'll be enough for Miss Larches and you, Nelly; and we gentlemen will beam smiles upon you as we mince our modest share. Let us go in. Mr. Key, will you commit yourself to Mrs. Grey? Miss Larches, will you lay aside your

bonnet? Oh, it's off already! One can't see, unless one stands behind you; and I prefer the front view. Pray, take my arm. And, Tomes, keep at a respectful distance in the rear, for the safety of Miss Larches's skirts, or she will be for excluding you, if we should have a talk about another phase of Daily Beauty, or stay away herself; and neither of you could be spared.

THE ARTIST-PRISONER

Here, in this vacant cell of mine,
I picture and paint my Apennine.

In spite of walls and gyvéd wrist,
I gather my gold and amethyst.

The muffled footsteps' ebb and swell,
Immutable tramp of sentinel,

The clenchéd lip, the gaze of doom,
The hollow-resounding dungeon-gloom,

All fade and cease, as, mass and line,
I shadow the sweep of Apennine,

And from my olive palette take
The marvellous pigments, flake by flake.

With azure, pearl, and silver white,
The purple of bloom and malachite,

Ceiling, wall, and iron door,
When the grim guard goes, I picture o'er.

E'en where his shadow falls athwart
The sunlight of noon, I've a glory wrought,—

Have shaped the gloom and golden shine
To image my gleaming Apennine.

No cruel Alpine heights are there,
Dividing the depths of pallid air;

But sea-blue liftings, far and fine,
With driftings of pearl and coralline;

And domes of marble, every one
All ambered o'er by setting sun;—

Yes, marble realms, that, clear and high,
So float in the purple-azure sky,

We all have deemed them, o'er and o'er,
Miraculous isles of madrepore;

Nor marvel made that hither floods
Bore wonderful forms of hero-gods.

Oh, can you see, as spirit sees,
Yon silvery sheen of olive-trees?

To me a sound of murmuring doves
Comes wandering up from olive-groves,

And lingers near me, while I dwell
On yonder fair field of asphodel,

Half-lost in sultry songs of bees,
As, touching my chaliced anemones,

I prank their leaves with dusty sheen
To show where the golden bees have been.

On granite wall I paint the June
With emerald grape and wild festoon,—

Its chestnut-trees with open palms
Beseeching the sun for daily alms,—

In sloping valley, veiled with vines,
A violet path beneath the pines,—

The way one goes to find old Rome,
Its far away sign a purple dome.

But not for me the glittering shrine:
I worship my God in the Apennine!

To all save those of artist eyes,
The listeners to silent symphonies,

Only a cottage small is mine,

With poppied pasture, sombre pine.

But *they* hear anthems, prayer, and bell,
And sometimes they hear an organ swell;

They see what seems—so saintly fair—
Madonna herself a-wandering there,

Bearing baby so divine
They speak of the Child in Palestine!

Yet I, who threw my palette down
To fight on the walls of yonder town,

Know them for wife and baby mine,
As, weeping, I trace them, line by line,
In far-off glen of Apennine!

THE MINISTER'S WOOING

[Continued.]

CHAPTER XXV

A GUEST AT THE COTTAGE

Nothing is more striking, in the light and shadow of the human drama, than to compare the inner life and thoughts of elevated and silent natures with the thoughts and plans which those by whom they are surrounded have of and for them. Little thought Mary of any of the speculations that busied the friendly head of Miss Prissy, or that lay in the provident forecastings of her prudent mother. When a life into which all our life-nerves have run is cut suddenly away, there follows, after the first long bleeding is stanched, an internal paralysis of certain portions of our nature. It was so with Mary: the thousand fibres that bind youth and womanhood to earthly love and life were all in her as still as the grave, and only the spiritual and divine part of her being was active. Her hopes, desires, and aspirations were all such as she could have had in greater perfection as a disembodied spirit than as a mortal woman. The small stake for self which she

had invested in life was gone,—and henceforward all personal matters were to her so indifferent that she scarce was conscious of a wish in relation to her own individual happiness. Through the sudden crush of a great affliction, she was in that state of self-abnegation to which the mystics brought themselves by fastings and self-imposed penances,—a state not purely healthy, nor realizing the divine ideal of a perfect human being made to exist in the relations of human life,—but one of those exceptional conditions, which, like the hours that often precede dissolution, seem to impart to the subject of them a peculiar aptitude for delicate and refined spiritual impressions. We could not afford to have it always night,—and we must think that the broad, gay morning light, when meadow-lark and robin and bobolink are singing in chorus with a thousand insects and the waving of a thousand breezes, is on the whole the most in accordance with the average wants of those who have a material life to live and material work to do. But then we reverence that clear-obscure of midnight, when everything is still and dewy;—then sing the nightingales, which cannot be heard by day; then shine the mysterious stars. So when all earthly voices are hushed in the soul, all earthly lights darkened, music and color float in from a higher sphere.

No veiled nun, with her shrouded forehead and downcast eyes, ever moved about a convent with a spirit more utterly divided from the world, than Mary moved about her daily employments. Her care about the details of life seemed more

than ever minute; she was always anticipating her mother in every direction, and striving by a thousand gentle preveniences to save her from fatigue and care; there was even a tenderness about her ministrations, as if the daughter had changed feelings and places with the mother.

The Doctor, too, felt a change in her manner towards him, which, always considerate and kind, was now invested with a tender thoughtfulness and anxious solicitude to serve which often brought tears to his eyes. All the neighbors who had been in the habit of visiting at the house received from her, almost daily, in one little form or another, some proof of her thoughtful remembrance.

She seemed in particular to attach herself to Mrs. Marvyn, —throwing her care around that fragile and wounded nature, as a generous vine will sometimes embrace with tender leaves and flowers a dying tree.

But her heart seemed to have yearnings beyond even the circle of home and friends. She longed for the sorrowful and the afflicted,—she would go down to the forgotten and the oppressed,—and made herself the companion of the Doctor's secret walks and explorings among the poor victims of the slave-ships, and entered with zeal as teacher among his African catechumens.

Nothing but the limits of bodily strength could confine her zeal to do and suffer for others; a river of love had suddenly been checked in her heart, and it needed all these channels to

drain off the waters that must otherwise have drowned her in the suffocating agonies of repression.

Sometimes, indeed, there would be a returning thrill of the old wound,—one of those overpowering moments when some turn in life brings back anew a great anguish. She would find unexpectedly in a book a mark that he had placed there,—or a turn in conversation would bring back a tone of his voice,—or she would see on some thoughtless young head curls just like those which were swaying to and fro down among the wavering seaweeds,—and then her heart gave one great throb of pain, and turned for relief to some immediate act of love to some living being. They who saw her in one of these moments felt a surging of her heart towards them, a moisture of the eye, a sense of some inexpressible yearning, and knew not from what pain that love was wrung, nor how that poor heart was seeking to still its own throbbings in blessing them.

By what name shall we call this beautiful twilight, this night of the soul, so starry with heavenly mysteries? *Not* happiness,—but blessedness. They who have it walk among men "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing,—as poor, yet making many rich,—as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

The Doctor, as we have seen, had always that reverential spirit towards women which accompanies a healthy and great nature; but in the constant converse which he now held with a beautiful being, from whom every particle of selfish feeling or mortal weakness seemed sublimed, he appeared to yield

his soul up to her leading with a wondering humility, as to some fair, miraculous messenger of Heaven. All questions of internal experience, all delicate shadings of the spiritual history, with which his pastoral communings in his flock made him conversant, he brought to her to be resolved with the purest simplicity of trust.

"She is one of the Lord's rarities," he said, one day, to Mrs. Scudder, "and I find it difficult to maintain the bounds of Christian faithfulness in talking with her. It is a charm of the Lord's hidden ones that they know not their own beauty; and God forbid that I should tempt a creature made so perfect by divine grace to self-exaltation, or lay my hand unadvisedly, as Uzzah did, upon the ark of God, by my inconsiderate praises!"

"Well, Doctor," said Miss Prissy, who sat in the corner, sewing on the dove-colored silk, "I do wish you could come into one of our meetings and hear those blessed prayers. I don't think you nor anybody else ever heard anything like 'em."

"I would, indeed, that I might with propriety enjoy the privilege," said the Doctor.

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Miss Prissy; "next week they're going to meet here; and I'll leave the door just ajar, and you can hear every word, just by standing in the entry."

"Thank you, Madam," said the Doctor; "it would certainly be a blessed privilege, but I cannot persuade myself that such an act would be consistent with Christian propriety."

"Ah, now do hear that good man!" said Miss Prissy, after he

had left the room; "if he ha'n't got the making of a real gentleman in him, as well as a real Christian!—though I always did say, for my part, that a real Christian will be a gentleman. But I don't believe all the temptations in the world could stir that blessed man one jot or grain to do the least thing that he thinks is wrong or out of the way. Well, I must say, I never saw such a good man; he is the only man I ever saw good enough for our Mary."

Another spring came round, and brought its roses, and the apple-trees blossomed for the third time since the commencement of our story; and the robins had rebuilt their nest, and began to lay their blue eggs in it; and Mary still walked her calm course, as a sanctified priestess of the great worship of sorrow. Many were the hearts now dependent on her, the spiritual histories, the threads of which were held in her loving hand,—many the souls burdened with sins, or oppressed with sorrow, who found in her bosom at once confessional and sanctuary. So many sought her prayers, that her hours of intercession were full, and often needed to be lengthened to embrace all for whom she would plead. United to the good Doctor by a constant friendship and fellowship, she had gradually grown accustomed to the more and more intimate manner in which he regarded her,—which had risen from a simple "dear child," and "dear Mary," to "dear friend," and at last "dearest of all friends," which he frequently called her, encouraged by the calm, confiding sweetness of those still, blue eyes, and that gentle smile, which came without one varying flutter of the pulse or the rising of the slightest flush on

the marble cheek.

One day a letter was brought in, postmarked "Philadelphia." It was from Madame de Frontignac; it was in French, and ran as follows:–

"MY DEAR LITTLE WHITE ROSE:—

"I am longing to see you once more, and before long [shall be in Newport. Dear little Mary, I am sad, very sad;—the days seem all of them too long; and every morning I look out of my window and wonder why I was born. I am not so happy as I used to be, when I cared for nothing but to sing and smooth my feathers like the birds. That is the best kind of life for us women;—if we love anything better than our clothes, it is sure to bring us great sorrow. For all that, I can't help thinking it is very noble and beautiful to love;—love is very beautiful, but very, very sad. My poor dear little white cat, I should like to hold you a little while to my heart;—it is so cold all the time, and aches so, I wish I were dead; but then I am not good enough to die. The Abbe says, we must offer up our sorrow to God as a satisfaction for our sins. I have a good deal to offer, because my nature is strong and I can feel a great deal.

"But I am very selfish, dear little Mary, to think only of myself, when I know how you must suffer. Ah! but you knew he loved you truly, the poor dear boy!—that is something. I pray daily for his soul; don't think it wrong of me; you know it is our

religion;—we should all do our best for each other.

"Remember me tenderly to Mrs. Marvyn. Poor mother!—the bleeding heart of the Mother of God alone can understand such sorrows.

"I am coming in a week or two, and then I have many things to say to *ma belle rose blanche*; till then I kiss her little hands.

"VIRGINIE DE FRONTIGNAC."

One beautiful afternoon, not long after, a carriage stopped at the cottage, and Madame de Frontignac alighted. Mary was spinning in her garret-boudoir, and Mrs. Scudder was at that moment at a little distance from the house, sprinkling some linen, which was laid out to bleach on the green turf of the clothes-yard.

Madame de Frontignac sent away the carriage, and ran up the stairway, pursuing the sound of Mary's spinning-wheel mingled with her song; and in a moment, throwing aside the curtain, she seized Mary in her arms, and kissed her on either cheek, laughing and crying both at once.

"I knew where I should find you, *ma blanche*! I heard the wheel of my poor little princess! It's a good while since we spun together, *mimi*! Ah, Mary, darling, little do we know what we spin! life is hard and bitter, isn't it? Ah, how white your cheeks are, poor child!"

Madame de Frontignac spoke with tears in her own eyes, passing her hand caressingly over the fair checks.

"And you have grown pale, too, dear Madame," said Mary, looking up, and struck with the change in the once brilliant face.

"Have I, *petite?* I don't know why not. We women have secret places where our life runs out. At home I wear rouge; that makes all right;—but I don't put it on for you, Mary; you see me just as I am."

Mary could not but notice the want of that brilliant color and roundness in the cheek, which once made so glowing a picture; the eyes seemed larger and tremulous with a pathetic depth, and around them those bluish circles that speak of languor and pain. Still, changed as she was, Madame de Frontignac seemed only more strikingly interesting and fascinating than ever. Still she had those thousand pretty movements, those nameless graces of manner, those wavering shades of expression, that irresistibly enchained the eye and the imagination,—true Frenchwoman as she was, always in one rainbow shimmer of fancy and feeling, like one of those cloud-spotted April days which give you flowers and rain, sun and shadow, and snatches of bird-singing all at once.

"I have sent away my carriage, Mary, and come to stay with you. You want me—*n'est ce pas?*" she said, coaxingly, with her arms round Mary's neck; "if you don't, *tant pis!* for I am the bad penny you English speak of,—you cannot get me off."

"I am sure, dear friend," said Mary, earnestly, "we don't want to put you off."

"I know it; you are true; you *mean* what you say; you are all good real gold, down to your hearts; that is why I love you. But you, my poor Mary, your cheeks are very white; poor little heart, you suffer!"

"No," said Mary; "I do not suffer now. Christ has given me the victory over sorrow."

There was something sadly sublime in the manner in which this was said,—and something so sacred in the expression of

Mary's face that Madame de Frontignac crossed herself, as she been wont before a shrine; and then said, "Sweet Mary, pray for me; I am not at peace; I cannot get the victory over sorrow."

"What sorrow can you have?" said Mary,—"you, so beautiful, so rich, so admired, whom everybody must love?"

"That is what I came to tell you; I came to confess to you. But you must sit down there" she said, placing Mary on a low seat in the garret-window; "and Virginie will sit here," she said, drawing a bundle of uncarded wool towards her, and sitting down at Mary's feet.

"Dear Madame," said Mary, "let me get you a better seat."

"No, no, *mignonne*, this is best; I want to lay my head in your lap";—and she took off her riding-hat with its streaming plume, and tossed it carelessly from her, and laid her head down on Mary's lap. "Now don't call me Madame any more. Do you know," she said, raising her head with a sudden brightening of cheek and eye, "do you know that there are two *mes* to this person?—one is Virginie, and the other is Madame de Frontignac. Everybody in Philadelphia knows Madame de Frontignac:—she is very gay, very careless, very happy; she never has any serious hours, or any sad thoughts; she wears powder and diamonds, and dances all night, and never prays;—that is Madame. But Virginie is quite another thing. She is tired of all this,—tired of the balls, and the dancing, and the diamonds, and the beaux; and she likes true people, and would like to live very quiet with somebody that she loved. She is very unhappy; and

she prays, too, sometimes, in a poor little way,—like the birds in your nest out there, who don't know much, but chipper and cry because they are hungry. This is your Virginie. Madame never comes here,—never call me Madame."

"Dear Virginie," said Mary, "how I love you!"

"Do you, Mary,—*bien sûr?* You are my good angel! I felt a good impulse from you when I first saw you, and have always been stronger to do right when I got one of your pretty little letters. Oh, Mary, darling, I have been very foolish and very miserable, and sometimes tempted to be very, very bad! Oh, sometimes I thought I would not care for God or anything else! —it was very bad of me,—but I was like a foolish little fly caught in a spider's net before he knows it."

Mary's eyes questioned her companion, with an expression of eager sympathy, somewhat blended with curiosity.

"I can't make you understand me quite," said Madame de Frontignac, "unless I go back a good many years. You see, dear Mary, my dear angel mamma died when I was very little, and I was sent to be educated at the Sacré Coeur, in Paris. I was very happy and very good, in those days; the sisters loved me, and I loved them; and I used to be so pious, and loved God dearly. When I took my first communion, Sister Agatha prepared me. She was a true saint, and is in heaven now; and I remember, when I came to her, all dressed like a bride, with my white crown and white veil, that she looked at me so sadly, and said she hoped I would never love anybody better than God, and then I should

be happy. I didn't think much of those words then; but, oh, I have since, many times! They used to tell me always that I had a husband who was away in the army, and who would come to marry me when I was seventeen, and that he would give me all sorts of beautiful things, and show me everything I wanted to see in the world, and that I must love and honor him.

"Well, I was married at last; and Monsieur de Frontignac is a good brave man, although he seemed to me very old and sober; but he was always kind to me, and gave me nobody knows how many sets of jewelry, and let me do everything I wanted to, and so I liked him very much; but I thought there was no danger I should love him, or anybody else, better than God. I didn't *love* anybody in those days; I only liked people, and some people more than others. All the men I saw professed to be lovers, and I liked to lead them about and see what foolish things I could make them do, because it pleased my vanity; but I laughed at the very idea of love.

"Well, Mary, when we came to Philadelphia, I heard everybody speaking of Colonel Burr, and what a fascinating man he was; and I thought it would be a pretty thing to have him in my train,—and so I did all I could to charm him. I tried all my little arts,—and if it is a sin for us women to do such things, I am sure I have been punished for it. Mary, he was stronger than I was. These men, they are not satisfied with having the whole earth under their feet, and having all the strength and all the glory, but they must even take away our poor little reign;—it's too bad!

"I can't tell you how it was; I didn't know myself; but it seemed to me that he took my very life away from me; and it—was all done before I knew it. He called himself my friend, my brother; he offered to teach me English; he read with me; and by-and-by he controlled my whole life. I, that used to be so haughty, so proud,-I, that used to laugh to think how independent I was of everybody,—I was entirely under his control, though I tried not to show it. I didn't well know where I was; for he talked friendship, and I talked friendship; he talked about sympathetic natures that are made for each other, and I thought how beautiful it all was; it was living in a new world. Monsieur de Frontignac was as much charmed with him as I was; he often told me that he was his best friend,—that he was his hero, his model man; and I thought,–oh, Mary, you would wonder to hear me say what I thought! I thought he was a Bayard, a Sully, a Montmorenci,—everything grand and noble and good. I loved him with a religion; I would have died for him; I sometimes thought how I might lay down my life to save his, like women I read of in history. I did not know myself; I was astonished I could feel so; and I did not dream that this could be wrong. How could I, when it made me feel more religious than anything in my whole life? Everything in the world seemed to grow sacred. I thought, if men could be so good and admirable, life was a holy thing, and not to be trifled with.

"But our good Abbé is a faithful shepherd; and when I told him these things in confession, be told me I was in great danger, —danger of falling into mortal sin. Oh, Mary, it was as if the

earth had opened under me! He told me, too, that this noble man, this man so dear, was a heretic, and that, if he died, he would go to dreadful pains. Oh, Mary, I dare not tell you half what he told me,—dreadful things that make me shiver when I think of them! And then he said that I must offer myself a sacrifice for him; that, if I would put down all this love, and overcome it, God would perhaps accept it as a satisfaction, and bring him into the True Church at last.

"Then I began to try. Oh, Mary, we never know how we love till we try to unlove! It seemed like taking my heart out of my breast, and separating life from life. How can one do it? I wish any one would tell me. The Abbé said I must do it by prayer; but it seemed to me prayer only made me think the more of him.

"But at last I had a great shock; everything broke up like a great, grand, noble dream,—and I waked out of it just as weak and wretched as one feels when one has overslept. Oh, Mary, I found I was mistaken in him,—all, all, wholly!"

Madame de Frontignac laid her forehead on Mary's knee, and her long chestnut hair drooped down over her face.

"He was going somewhere with my husband to explore, out in the regions of the Ohio, where he had some splendid schemes of founding a state; and I was all interest. And one day, as they were preparing, Monsieur de Frontignac gave me a quantity of papers to read and arrange, and among them was a part of a letter;—I never could imagine how it got there; it was from Burr to one of his confidential friends. I read it, at first, wondering what it

meant, till I came to two or three sentences about me."

Madame de Frontignac paused a moment, and then said, rising with sudden energy,—

"Mary, that man never loved me; he cannot love; he does not know what love is. What I felt he cannot know; he cannot even dream of it, because he never felt anything like it. Such men never know us women; we are as high as heaven above them. It is true enough that my heart was wholly in his power,—but why? Because I adored him as something divine, incapable of dishonor, incapable of selfishness, incapable of even a thought that was not perfectly noble and heroic. If he had been all that, I should have been proud to be even a poor little flower that should exhale away to give him an hour's pleasure; I would have offered my whole life to God as a sacrifice for such a glorious soul;—and all this time, what was he thinking of me?

"He was *using* my feelings to carry his plans; he was admiring me like a picture; he was considering what he should do with me; and but for his interests with my husband, he would have tried his power to make me sacrifice this world and the next to his pleasure. But he does not know me. My mother was a Montmorenci, and I have the blood of her house in my veins; we are princesses;—we can give all; but he must be a god that we give it for."

Mary's enchanted eye followed the beautiful narrator, as she enacted before her this poetry and tragedy of real life, so much beyond what dramatic art can ever furnish. Her eyes grew

splendid in their depth and brilliancy; sometimes they were full of tears, and sometimes they flashed out like lightnings; her whole form seemed to be a plastic vehicle which translated every emotion of her soul; and Mary sat and looked at her with the intense absorption that one gives to the highest and deepest in Art or Nature.

"*Enfin,—que faire*?" she said at last, suddenly stopping, and drooping in every limb. "Mary, I have lived on this dream so long!—never thought of anything else!—now all is gone, and what shall I do? I think, Mary," she added, pointing to the nest in the tree, "I see my life in many things. My heart was once still and quiet, like the round little eggs that were in your nest;—now it has broken out of its shell, and cries with cold and hunger. I want my dream again,—I wish it all back,—or that my heart could go back into its shell. If I only could drop this year out of my life, and care for nothing, as I used to! I have tried to do that; I can't; I cannot get back where I was before."

"*Would* you do it, dear Virginie?" said Mary; "would you, if you could?"

"It was very noble and sweet, all that," said Virginie; "it gave me higher thoughts than ever I had before; I think my feelings were beautiful;—but now they are like little birds that have no mother; they kill me with their crying."

"Dear Virginie, there is a real Friend in heaven, who is all you can ask or think,—nobler, better, purer,—who cannot change, and cannot die, and who loved you and gave Himself for you."

"You mean Jesus," said Virginie. "Ah, I know it; and I say the offices to him daily, but my heart is very wild and starts away from my words. I say, 'My God, I give myself to you!'—and after all, I don't give myself, and I don't feel comforted. Dear Mary, you must have suffered, too,—for you loved really,—I saw it;—when we feel a thing ourselves, we can see very quick the same in others;—and it was a dreadful blow to come so all at once."

"Yes, it was," said Mary; "I thought I must die; but Christ has given me peace."

These words were spoken with that long-breathed sigh with which we always speak of peace,—a sigh that told of storms and sorrows past,—the sighing of the wave that falls spent and broken on the shores of eternal rest.

There was a little pause in the conversation, and then Virginie raised her head and spoke in a sprightlier lone.

"Well, my little fairy cat, my white doe, I have come to you. Poor Virginie wants something to hold to her heart; let me have you," she said, throwing her arms round Mary.

"Dear, dear Virginie, indeed you shall!" said Mary. "I will love you dearly, and pray for you. I always have prayed for you, ever since the first day I knew you."

"I knew it,—I felt your prayers in my heart. Mary, I have many thoughts that I dare not tell to any one, lately,—but I cannot help feeling that some are real Christians who are not in the True Church. You are as true a saint as Saint Catharine; indeed, I always think of you when I think of our dear Lady; and yet they

say there is no salvation out of the Church."

This was a new view of the subject to Mary, who had grown up with the familiar idea that the Romish Church was Babylon and Antichrist, and who, during the conversation, had been revolving the same surmises with regard to her friend. She turned her grave, blue eyes on Madame de Frontignac with a somewhat surprised look, which melted into a half-smile. But the latter still went on with a puzzled air, as if trying to talk herself out of some mental perplexity.

"Now, Burr is a heretic,—and more than that, he is an infidel; he has no religion in his heart,—I saw that often,—it made me tremble for him,—it ought to have put me on my guard. But you, dear Mary, you love Jesus as your life. I think you love him just as much as Sister Agatha, who was a saint. The Abbé says that there is nothing so dangerous as to begin to use our reason in religion,—that, if we once begin, we never know where it may carry us; but I can't help using mine a very little. I must think there are some saints that are not in the True Church."

"All are one who love Christ," said Mary; "we are one in Him."

"I should not dare to tell the Abbé," said Madame de Frontignac; and Mary queried in her heart, whether Dr. H. would feel satisfied that she could bring this wanderer to the fold of Christ without undertaking to batter down the walls of her creed; and yet, there they were, the Catholic and the Puritan, each strong in her respective faith, yet melting together in that embrace of love and sorrow, joined in the great communion of suffering.

Mary took up her Testament, and read the fourteenth chapter of John:—

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Mary read on through the chapter,—through the next wonderful prayer; her face grew solemnly transparent, as of an angel; for her soul was lifted from earth by the words, and walked with Christ far above all things, over that starry pavement where each footstep is on a world.

The greatest moral effects are like those of music,—not wrought out by sharp-sided intellectual propositions, but melted in by a divine fusion, by words that have mysterious, indefinite fulness of meaning, made living by sweet voices, which seem to be the out-throbbings of angelic hearts. So one verse in the Bible read by a mother in some hour of tender prayer has a significance deeper and higher than the most elaborate of sermons, the most acute of arguments.

Virginie Frontignac sat as one divinely enchanted, while that sweet voice read on; and when the silence fell between them, she gave a long sigh, as we do when sweet music stops. They heard between them the soft stir of summer leaves, the distant songs of birds, the breezy hum when the afternoon wind shivered through many branches, and the silver sea chimed in. Virginie rose at last,

and kissed Mary on the forehead.

"That is a beautiful book," she said, "and to read it all by one's self must be lovely. I cannot understand why it should be dangerous; it has not injured you.

"Sweet saint," she added, "let me stay with you; you shall read to me every day. Do you know I came here to get you to take me? I want you to show me how to find peace where you do; will you let me be your sister?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mary, with a cheek brighter than it had been for many a day; her heart feeling a throb of more real human pleasure than for long months.

"Will you get your mamma to let me stay?" said Virginie, with the bashfulness of a child; "haven't you a little place like yours, with white curtains and sanded floor, to give to poor little Virginie to learn to be good in?"

"Why, do you really want to stay here with us," said Mary, "in this little house?"

"Do I really?" said Virginie, mimicking her voice with a start of her old playfulness;—"*don't* I really? Come now, *mimi*, coax the good mamma for me,—tell her I shall try to be very good. I shall help you with the spinning,—you know I spin beautifully,—and I shall make butter, and milk the cow, and set the table. Oh, I will be so useful, you can't spare me!"

"I should love to have you dearly," said Mary, warmly; "but you would soon be dull for want of society here."

"*Quelle idée! ma petite dróle!*" said the lady,—who, with the

mobility of her nation, had already recovered some of the saucy mocking grace that was habitual to her, as she began teasing Mary with a thousand little childish motions. "Indeed, *mimi*, you must keep me hid up here, or may-be the wolf will find me and eat me up; who knows?"

Mary looked at her with inquiring eyes.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Mary,—I mean, that, when *he* comes back to Philadelphia, he thinks he shall find me there; he thought I should stay while my husband was gone; and when he finds I am gone, he may come to Newport; and I never want to see him again without you;—you must let me stay with you."

"Have you told him," said Mary, "what you think?"

"I wrote to him, Mary,—but, oh, I can't trust my heart! I want so much to believe him, it kills me so to think evil of him, that it will never do for me to see him. If he looks at me with those eyes of his, I am all gone; I shall believe anything he tells me; he will draw me to him as a great magnet draws a poor little grain of steel."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.