



The Hon. Mrs. John Fortescue.

THE spring openings in the houses of *la haute couture* in Paris and London showed us nothing very new. Perhaps for the first time in history women are having their own way. Lacking moral courage in the past, they slavishly obeyed Fashion's dictates, suffered imprisonment in cases of whalebone, endured hobble skirts and other absurdities, lest by wearing sensible clothing they should appear ridiculous.

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Gradually, however, they became rebellious, and demanded garments which should give them freedom of movement, until, to-day, the tables are turned, and *Madame La Mode* is laughed to scorn when she endeavours to launch some new form of clothing which is not also comfortable and practical.

And so the chemise dress and the two-piece dress have come to stay. They are varied in form, the fullness is arranged differently, new fabrics are introduced, and new trimmings and embroideries designed every season, but the slim, straight *silhouette* remains ever the most popular.

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Jeanne Lanvin creates beautiful *robes tie style* for the picturesque and exclusive few, but even she has been obliged to make simple, straight evening dresses for *debutantes* who desire to dance "until the floor is strewn with broken hearts!" Chanel, Patou, and Callot are embroidering their evening dresses with glittering sequins and beads in intricate designs to vary the effect. Chanel's models are usually in black, lacquer-red, and pale pink; Patou's favourite model is in natural steel, softened with points of black tulle to give grace and movement; while some of Callot's sheaths are really museum pieces, the embroidery so fine that it is only on close inspection that one realises the gowns are not made of brocade.

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These are created chiefly for the British and American public. The *Parisienne* prefers the plain *chiffon* or *georgette* dress, relieved with her own jewels. Ropes of pearls are worn by the majority; though fine platinum chains studded with diamonds or brilliants, little flexible necklets of platinum links set with stones, strands of seed pearls interspersed with diamonds, and bracelets of black onyx combined with pearls or brilliants, and sometimes necklaces and bracelets to match of smoothly-polished or square faceted stones are worn by the *ultra chic* women, who desire to find jewels which cannot easily be repeated in quantity.

It is interesting to notice the revival of hand-work in the French model dresses. There are some who believe that in developing hand-work again in their clothes the French *couture* will enhance its prestige with its very smart *clientele*, who have at times complained of the cheap reproductions of French models which have appeared. Frocks of *crepe* or *chiffon* were seen at the openings, finely tucked and scalloped, or

decorated with hand-drawn work. It is refreshing to see this effort to replace machine-made trimming by the French, for, years ago, very beautiful hand-embroidery characterised all the best French models.

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In old days the making of clothes was a fine art, and men and women wore their fortunes on their backs. The wardrobe of Henry VIII. was kept by the State until after the execution of Charles I., when, being a valuable asset, it was sold by the Commonwealth to help the country from a state of bankruptcy. Think of the clothes of Queen Elizabeth! There is a picture of her in the gown she wore when she went in state to a public thanksgiving for the defeat of the Armada. Every inch of that dress is hand-sewn, and embroidered all over with costly pearls.

Then there was the famous Count Bruhl, of Saxony, who had a different and more elaborate suit of clothes for every day of the year. His jewelled buttons are, many of them, to be seen to this day in the Green Vault, in Dresden.

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Even in the year 1773 men, apparently, spent much time and money upon their clothes. In a letter from Mrs. Delany to a woman friend she describes the apparel of an exquisite of the day:

"The chief topic of conversation yesterday was the appearance of Lord Villiers in the morning at Court in a pale purple velvet coat, turned up with lemon-colour, and embroidered all over with S. S's of pearl as big as pease, and in all the spaces little medallions in beaten gold, *real solid*, in various figures of Cupid and the like."

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Later, there was the wardrobe of the beautiful Empress Eugenie. Her hundreds of dresses were kept upon pasteboard mannequins in a great gallery. When she wished to select a gown she seated herself opposite the cupboards where they were kept, and the pasteboard figures, controlled by machinery, glided in procession before her along little tramlines.

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What hours of thought and labour have been expended upon clothes! How one pities the maids and the dressers of dead queens and great ladies! Imagine the space these elaborate garments must have taken when packed for a journey! To-day, we can pack our jumper-suits of stockinet or silk into a suitcase without fear of damage; our little wisps of *chiffon*, *crepe-de-chine*, or *georgette* take no room at all. We can stow away ten frocks in the space occupied by one gown of Queen Elizabeth. They talk of "the good old days!" Personally, I believe that the women of this twentieth century, with their shingled heads, and their untrammelled bodies are far happier, healthier, and wiser than their ancestresses, even if they be less picturesque! "Back to Nature" is their motto, and, if they do not take it *too* literally, they could not find a better.