



The Hon. Lady Fortescue.

THE Spring frocks really do suggest the fresh joyousness of Primavera. There is a lightness of fabric, an unexpectedness of decoration, a tenderness of tint in the evening dresses for *debutantes* which bring to mind the little cirrus clouds floating in an April sky, nodding daffy down dillies in the grass, sprays of peach-blossom, the wagging of baby lambs' tails, the swaying of pussy-willow branches in the breeze, and other delicious things we associate with an English Spring.

There are frocks of lace—particularly of lace—fitting close to the body and flowing out into fan-like peacock tails in the skirt, with floating panels and uneven hems, sometimes controlled by a tight swathed sash over the slim hips ; frocks of georgette, beaded most exquisitely by hand, with fairy designs ; fluffy confections of chiffon with tier upon tier of graduated flounces and frills, dipping at the back and sides and shorter in front ; long tight sleeves, or huge loose bell sleeves ; panniers, bustles, and old-world picture styles, adapted to the use of the active modern girl.

In the matter of colour we have a wide choice of tints—some flaring and daring, only suited to older and more sophisticated women who can carry off a conspicuous colour with *aplomb* ; but for the *debutante* it is a pastel season of fresh tender greens, blush pinks, cerulean blues, the yellows of primrose and daffodil—and, for those who possess the right tone of skin, white is loveliest of all. In curious contrast to the morning styles, which grow ever more severe and masculine in line, the afternoon and evening frocks become more and more feminine. Inconsequent scarves of contrasting chiffon, *crepe de Chine* or tulle, are knotted, twisted or left to fly in the wind. Shoulder-knots—once known only in the nursery—now adorn adult shoulders ; lace jabots and frills may soften the neck or wrists; bunches of flowers or fruit made of leather, crystal, silk, feathers or raffia are worn, and even the severity of a well-cut *tailleur* or afternoon wrap is mitigated by a wee nosegay of these flowers pinned into a buttonhole or tucked into a fur collar,

Designers are evidently weary of the monotony of the straight chemise frock which has been so popular because it is so easy to make and so easy to wear. They have flared the skirts, made the hems uneven, but now all varieties of this particular dress have been exhausted they are striving to reintroduce the fashions of past centuries, modified to suit the requirements of our twentieth century. There is something excessively *piqwnte* in a sleek shingled head in conjunction with a picture-frock, but the owner of both should be careful that her movements are in harmony with her dress rather than her coiffure. The boyish stride and the nonchalant posture when seated, with one slim leg crossed high over the other—very attractive with a jumper-suit or mannish tailor-made, and extremely good, so the medical man tells us, for the development of the peranybulatory muscles which generations of long skirts have

atrophied in most women—are nevertheless entirely unsuitable when wearing a flounced or panniered frock.

But we women are such a bundle of contradictions, a mass of incongruities," that surely we can understand and compass these little distinctions with success.

I was much interested to hear the views of a seventeen-year-old *debutante* just returned from eighteen months' French-polishing in Paris. I asked her what she thought of dress in London when she came back there in December.

"Dreadfully good and dreadfully dowdy," she said promptly, smoothing down her French shingle.

Pressed to be more explicit, she went on, " When I came home for Christmas the frocks all seemed to me so solid and over-trimmed, made of the most wonderful materials, of course, but heavy and rich and—well—*dowdy*, as I said before. In Paris they take a wisp of chiffon and lace and blow them together, and there you have the daintiest ' creation ' imaginable, or they cut some satin or velvet into a straight slim shape and the line is quite perfect. Here, in London, it seemed to me that the women looked carefully upholstered, like furniture, and *heaps* too much trimming on the young girls' frocks." Pausing for a moment to apply powder to an attractive, cheeky nose, she went on, " In Paris they create frocks, in London they only make them.

Well, in the Spring designs I see in London the light French influence seems to have crept into the English models, which are certainly not *dowdy*, while some are dreams of loveliness. My "deb" went on to describe to me the life of a young girl just out in London to-day. It appears that the shortage of men so universally felt in early post-war days is over, and now—so she told me—there are many more men than girls in every ball-room. But these men are only seen at night. No longer are there luncheon and tea-parties of gay boys and girls—the boys are all working hard for a living during the day—leisured men are practically extinct, the breed crushed by heavy taxation, and no men are available for any social festivity before six o'clock. And so the girls amuse themselves as best they can until that hour. Luncheon-parties and tea-fights for girls only, are held daily everywhere, in hotel-restaurants and women's clubs as well as in private houses. And my informant assured me that they were "lots of fun."

She also told me that all that was written or said about the laxity of parental control over the modern girl is grossly wrong. The pendulum has swung back, apparently, and now girls 'are almost excessively chaperoned. Very careful inquiries are made about a hostess and her friends before a daughter is allowed to be included in a ball-party or allowed to attend a social function, even with a chaperone,

Soon we shall again be dancing minuets !