

April 15th, 1927.



THE COMING FASHIONS.

I have just seen some fashionable varieties of present-day modes. The collection was essentially French, though many English fabrics were used, especially in the sports clothes and tailors which are an important factor in any collection. Very new are the suits of skin and suede, and the overcoats of leather-lined wool. The waist-line in several frocks was normal; neck-lines were finished softly, often with lace or cambric. Belts, wide and narrow, were worn. Silver kid looked well on black. Day dresses showed skirts shorter than ever. The evening dresses were very lovely; skirts were being worn longer and much draped.

SMART SPORTS CLOTHES.

The best fashions for all forms of sport or, indeed, the semi-sports clothes that are in general vogue are admirably simple. Simplicity is, of course, a somewhat misleading term in this connection, as nowadays it signifies the exclusive element in dress, which is neither cheap nor easy of attainment. The modern simplicity is most ingenious, depending largely on the intricacies of cut and arrangement of geometrical designs. Sometimes patterns of this nature are actually woven into the stuff itself. At this season of the year the majority of women prefer to adhere to well-known and proved lines that look equally well in Johannesburg as in Cape Town, for the smart woman is, as a rule, very well turned out to-day; in fact, real sporting kit she can give points to the smart visitor. The easy-to-wear, every-day becoming sort of clothes are the general choice for the next two months, or for the few days' holiday that come at the end of this week.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

The answers to correspondents in some of the women's newspapers provide very interesting reading, and as I have recently been looking through the early issue of the first women's newspaper which appeared as far back as 1693, I am quoting a few for the delectation of my readers. The paper in question was called the *Ladies' Mercury*, and presumably answered the purpose of the day. But it is in the editor's dealing with his correspondents that the real humour of the publication is apparent.

Once, the *Mercury* is on the side of the angels. A bridegroom writes sadly of his father's attitude towards his wife, a lady "of neither birth nor fortune, but with youth, beauty, and religion," and is told with some shrewdness, "As your bride she is honourable, though perhaps, as her father's daughter, not so; and 'twould be a piece of wisdom in your father to look before him and not behind him."

And once, though its advice is hardly moral, it is amusing. A correspondent complains bitterly that her husband will not give her a new coach, his first wife's coach being "absolutely impossible for a woman of my stature, with the superstructure of a fashionable top-knot, to sit upright in." He promises her one "when the wars are done." But though she prays twice a day for the King's success, William and the great Louis still face one another in the Netherlands, and she must squeeze herself and her "Toppings" into the old and

hated coach. "Alas! poor lady," says the *Mercury*, "with an old rusty coach to creep into! Feign thyself downright sick, and whisper the apothecary to tell thy husband trouble of mind is the cause of the disease, and nothing but humouring will cure it; and a new coach will soon mend these insupportable indignities."

But the remaining questions and answers are, in their general scurrility, a poor compliment to the nice feeling of late seventeenth-century women. One suspects that the editor had a pretty taste in scandal of his own, and was offering his readers rather what he cared to read himself than what he seriously thought might please them. Perhaps he had eye, too, for the gentlemen of the coffee houses, and there were probably more chuckles over the *Ladies' Mercury* under the full-bottomed wigs at Wills's or the Cocoa Tree than under the wired lace "fontanges" in the ladies' parlours.

Certainly the paper can hardly have been a success, for although it still invited "questions relating to love, etc.," and promised they "should be weekly answered with all the zeal and softness becoming the sex," no further numbers exist. The question and answer idea—always a feature of feminine journalism—was a good one. But women wanted something better than an amorous "Notes and Queries" in dubious taste. One likes to think they did not support this unfortunately conceived venture, and were content to wait until later journalists should, in the eighteenth century, set before them matter such as they would better care to read.

THE CARE OF THE PIANO.

The best daily care that can be given to a piano is to dust the case and keys with a soft, non-linting duster and the sounding board with a soft hair brush; or to blow out the dust with small hand-bellows. A varnish finish is usually given to a piano case. The typical process of finishing is first to apply a filler, which gives colour to the wood and fills the pores. This is followed by a coat of varnish, which is allowed to dry for two weeks, and is then rubbed with coarse pumice. Varnishing and rubbing are repeated five times, and then a final thin polishing coat of varnish is applied. This is rubbed down with fine pumice, and a high gloss finish is obtained by rubbing gently with fine rottenstone and water, the soft hand of the worker being used for rubbing and developing the sheen. If a satin finish is desired, handrubbing with fine pumice and oil of water is resorted to.

To clean the ivories, dip a soft cloth into lukewarm water and wring it as dry as possible, shake it for a few seconds to remove any surplus moisture, and then wipe the top of each key. A few drops of alcohol may be used instead of the lukewarm water, and if the water is hard this is to be preferred. The ebony keys are apt to turn grey with too frequent cleaning, and in order to preserve the colour it is wise to cleanse them only by rubbing with a soft dry cloth.

Frequently the owner of a piano complains of the surface cracking; that is, of little fine lines appearing on the varnished surface. As explained above, the last coat of varnish is thin, and with the changes of temperature that are liable to occur in any room this layer of varnish is apt to contract and then expand. This causes cracking. Nothing will prevent this, but polishing the surface of the wood with a polish made of equal parts of turpentine and boiled linseed oil will tend to keep the varnish soft and make the cracks less noticeable. Always follow the use of the polish by a thorough rubbing with a soft dry cloth to absorb any excess of oil, for although the surface may be bright and shiny, if

the polish is applied and not rubbed in it leaves an oily surface, which catches dust and soon becomes gummy.

KEEPING SILVER CLEAN.

"Cleaning the silver" is something of a nightmare in many houses, and many people are deliberately putting away their plate in order to save labour. Where service must be reduced to a minimum this is, no doubt, a wise procedure, but it is a mistake to think that the silver ordinarily in use makes heavy demands upon time if it is to be kept properly. And certainly if it is not to be kept properly it is better dispensed with. The secret is to keep all that is in common use perfectly clean, and to protect all, whether for use or ornament, from the action of the atmosphere so far as possible. For this it is which tarnishes and dulls the surface and so involves repeated polishing. Provided silver is really clean, and when not in use is kept covered up from the air, the work of cleaning, properly so called, is reduced to a minimum.

REMOVAL OF STAINS.

Forks, etc., are apt to get stained, and this must be looked for, and remedied, after washing. Eggs, for instance, tarnishes, and the bowl of the spoon should be rubbed with a little fine dry salt, and washed again. Salt and mustard spoons, it is hardly necessary to say, should never be left in their cellars or pots, but should be washed and rubbed up after each time of use. Fruit stains, too, must be removed at once, as must those of vinegar from salads, etc. A mixture of oil and salt is usually effective; otherwise, hartshorn powder, mixed with spirits of wine to a paste, will answer, as it does for badly stained and blackened silver which has lain by. If washed at once after being used for fruit, vinegar, etc., the silver does not stain, however, and much trouble is saved.

The addition of a little ammonia to the first hot water is useful for brightening silver from time to time; soda is better left alone, as it dulls the polish.

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