

PZ
3

J144W

FT MEADE
GenColl





SATCHEL SERIES, No. 27.

What's
the
Matter?

PRICE 20 CENTS.

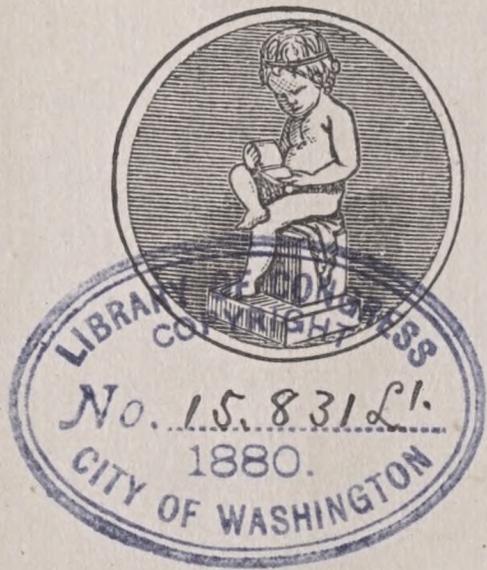
[Sketch series, no. 27]

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

BY

JOSEPHINE JACKSON.

40



NEW YORK :

THE AUTHORS' PUBLISHING COMPANY,

27 BOND STREET.

[1880]

P23
.J144W

COPYRIGHT, 1880,
BY THE AUTHORS' PUBLISHING COMPANY, NEW YORK.

PREFACE.

IF there is any good reason why I should call myself "the author," simply because I have written the following pages, I am ignorant of it. So I shall say "I."

What I believe to be facts I have, in the following pages, treated as such without the circumlocution of "the author has reached the conclusion after careful thought and study, that, *etc., etc.*" If this style seems dogmatic, it has at least the merit of brevity.

Having read that "Italics are odious," I feel some hesitancy about using them. Nevertheless, I confess to a liking for an author who has taken pains to elucidate matters by their use. It isn't pleasant to study half an hour over a sentence to decide what the author had uppermost in his mind at the time of writing, when a few words in italics would make it all clear.

The only criticism of the following pages to which I am not perfectly indifferent can only come from those who are farther advanced—more enlightened on the sub-

ject treated than I am. They may say, and justly, that the evils complained of are not portrayed with enough force. *Can* they be? Let those who thus criticise attempt the task, and they may then look with more toleration on my bungling effort.

They may also affirm that I have wholly left out some very important specifications. To this I also plead guilty, and again hope that my omissions may move some "abler pen" than mine to try and supply these deficiencies.

J. J.

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

CHAPTER I.

“Who said anything was the matter?”

I thought you did.

“You’re mistaken, madam.”

Probably you are a man, then; and it was your mother, or wife, or wife’s mother, or your daughter, sister, sister-in-law; aunt, grandmother, cousin, or maid-servant who said she had the headache, backache, sideache, neuralgia, nervousness, depression of spirits, etc., etc., etc. Please pardon my mistake, but tell me,—Why are women less healthy than men, and (if “common fame” has it right) less powerful of intellect?

Remembering that the Yankee answered, “Why, du they?” when the Englishman asked, “What makes a Yankee always answer one question by asking another?” I am not surprised to have my question met by the query, “Why, are they?”

At present, I propose to leave the intellect out of the question, considering merely the health.

If any of you are inclined to doubt that women are sick more than men, I refer you, first, to the family or families of which you have been a member as far back as your recollection extends; second, to the families with whom you are acquainted at the present time, and, third, to all the doctors you know. But I think this is unnecessary; for I have never seen a person who did not admit that invalids, especially chronic invalids, are much more numerous among women than among men—though a man “warranted sound and kind in all harness,” is exceedingly rare.

True, the statement has been made, that the average duration of life is greater among women than among men; but that is easily accounted for by the loss of life among sailors, soldiers, miners, and others whose occupation exposes them to dangers from which women are usually exempt. Besides these, there are reasons which we shall notice farther on.

But it is health, not life, that we are now considering, so let us return to the question, “Why are women less healthy than men?”

“*Because* they are women,” somebody answers.

Of all the reasons I ever heard assigned, that is the most absurdly preposterous.

“*Because they are women.*” I would just as lief call the Creator of all things a fool as to make such a statement as that. Will you tell me to whom Nature has consigned the young for care? Then will you tell me of any calling under the sun that requires more unceasing attention, steadier nerves, brighter spirits, greater endurance, patience, and wisdom than the care of children? You cannot charge the Ruler of the universe with greater folly than to claim that it is “natural for women to be sick.” There is not a day, not to speak of weeks, months, and years, from the very earliest existence of a child, that it can afford to have its mother sick.

“*Because they are women.*” If this be true, let the naturalist cease his cry of “wonderful adaptation of means to ends.” Wonderful *inadaptation* would be much more appropriate.

But, thank God, that is *not* true. He has not made the owl to seek its prey by night and given it eyes that can only see in the daytime. He has not given the fishes fins and gills and placed them on dry land to die of thirst and inaction. He has not fitted the ani-

mals who sport among ice and snow for that life and put them on the equator; and he has *not* called woman to a sphere more than all others requiring unceasing joyous, bounding health, and formed her so that sickness, especially protracted sickness, is a necessity. Does not your reason rebel against such a thought?

Furthermore, if sex be the cause of this difference, should we not find it wherever the two sexes exist? But is this the case? Are the females among horses, cattle, sheep, swine, cats, dogs, and fowls, wild or tame, any less healthy than the males? They should be if sex makes the difference. Remember we are not discussing size or strength now—only health.

So we come back to the question again: Why are women less healthy than men? If rum and tobacco do all that is asserted of them, men should be the sickly ones, for when it comes to dietetic habits, those of women certainly bear favorable comparison with those of men.

It is often said that the difference may be satisfactorily accounted for on the ground that women are more self-sacrificing than the other half of the world—that they will bear their own sufferings in silence and minister to the wants of others regardless of the tax on their own vitality, while the reverse is true of men.

Perhaps there is some ground for this opinion, but does anyone believe that accounts for all the difference? And—to leave the question direct and moralize a little—is it not a very unwise sacrifice, sacrificing much more than herself, for a woman, especially a wife, mother, and homemaker, to so exhaust her vital forces in serving others as in turn to require at their hands a hundred-fold of the service rendered. Perhaps women have exalted self-sacrifice too much, and ought to bring it down on a level with good sense and judgment; for certainly the health of women is of the highest importance.

What else can be replied to the question?—for it is not yet satisfactorily answered.

One reason for it is, that women do not value health as they should. The depraved notion that to be robust and healthy is not as lady-like, or womanly, if you please, as to be frail and sickly, has much to do with keeping women in the half-alive condition in which so many of them remain. Could our people know the truth, that to be sick is a *sin* and a *shame*, they would not so unblushingly tell of their sicknesses, aches, and pains. If you are sick somebody is to blame. And just think of the trouble it makes. Think, fathers and mothers who are lying in bed being taken care of, think if you

can, of what has put you in this condition. Every effect has its cause.

Ah, mother! in that long sickness of yours how your children suffered! How that son and daughter found their way into company that you so sorely regret. Had you been well, as it is the duty of every mother to be, you could have watched and guarded them. How your little ones were hurt physically and morally by the injudicious treatment of servants!

What a burden of care and sorrow your husband carried about! Do you remember that he sought in vain among all his relatives and yours to find a woman having a personal interest in the matter able to care for you and the little children, and was obliged to bring a stranger? Do you remember the perplexity and discouragement in his tone when he "wondered what was the matter with all the women?"

Oh yes, you remember it all; but has it occurred to you that such troubles as this is unnecessary—not only unnecessary but wicked?

Have you tried to study out the causes and avoid them in the future?

My heart aches when I consider all the misery that sickness causes. I think of cheerless, desolate, disor-

derly houses that but for sickness might be happy homes, and my sympathy reaches out with longing to offer some remedy. But when I talk to women on this subject, what do I hear? I hear that which convinces me that our people ought to be educated to a higher appreciation of health, to a greater realization of what a curse sickness is, and to a knowledge of the fact that as a rule, it is unnecessary.

A woman living in Middlebury, Conn., is the mother of thirteen children, and has never been confined to her bed a day in her life. I tell this to women. One looks incredulous, another scornful, another indifferent. I told it to a woman with a hollow chest, hollow eyes, hollow cheeks and a general all-gone look about her—she is under the doctor's care most of the time. What did she say? Surely such a forlorn specimen must have welcomed the knowledge that uninterrupted health is possible to a woman. Not a bit. She turned up her nose and said "That's too much like a cat."

I wanted to say you might as well be a cat as a miserable, peevish, nervous woman, but I refrained.

I told of this Middlebury wonder to another woman who has the headache three weeks out of four, is humped on the shoulders and drawn in at the stomach

—all from dyspepsia—and she said “That’s too much like a horse.”

I have told the same thing to others in no better condition than those I have mentioned, and instead of hearing a hearty wish that all women might be as healthy, we hear “That’s too much like the animals.”

Now, do tell me why “the animals” should have monopoly of God’s greatest earthly blessing—health? Is uninterrupted health a disgrace? No! We need to be converted in this respect.

Another reason for more invalidism—and just here let me ask you to consider the origin of the word. Invalid comes from two Latin words meaning not valid, and is defined, “Of no force, weight, or cogency; weak.” Can anything better describe a nonentity than that? What is it but a good-for-nothing. Of course you may be invalided muscularly and yet have “force, weight, or cogency,” mentally considered; but to be a thorough, or through and through invalid, is to be a thorough good-for-nothing; and I’d rather be a fine horse or a good cat even than to be a good-for-nothing.

What a grand thing a human being is with every muscle, every faculty, active and strong?

Do you realize it? Then compare such a being

with the feeble, irresolute, inefficient, suffering, dying specimens we everywhere meet, and tell me what *is* the matter?

In reply to the query, why a greater amount of this invalidism or uselessness is found among women, we are told that their indoor life explains it. Then please tell us what explains their indoor life. The very same thing that explains their having more than their share of sickness.

And now we have come to the great, all-sufficient reason for both.

CHAPTER II.

HERE I pause. It takes my breath away to think of making the fatal announcement. Not because it's something new and startling that nobody ever thought of before. No, no, not that. Enough has been said and written about it to convert millions if they would listen or read. You all know it yourselves, but somehow or other you persistently ignore it in your daily practice.

I am afraid that the minute your eyes light on the word you will throw down this book with a gesture of impatience, even if the exclamation of contempt be wanting, which—*isn't* very probable.

How can I bring myself to the task of uttering that little word? Behold me, on my knees, with my face aglow with passionate entreaty begging you by your love and respect for health, by your hatred and scorn of sickness, not to lay this book aside when I tell you that woman's dress is the great reason for her invalidism. Go on with me through these pages, and if

you can gainsay what I say, I will take it all back. If, on the contrary, I prove to you that woman in a suitable dress would be healthier, nobler, more useful and far happier, what do you propose to do about it? Men are called reasonable beings; women, I grieve to say, have the reputation of being unreasonable. I wonder how well each of you who read this book will sustain the character assigned. If you are a woman, when you read the arguments I bring against your style of dress, if you *are* unreasonable, you will go on your way as before—perhaps. If you are a man, and therefore (?) reasonable, you will straightway do your best to have all your female relatives wear something that will not keep them from being and doing all the good they are capable of.

But perhaps you want me to prove my statement that woman's dress is the cause of her being a greater or more common invalid than man. Well, I admit that, being only a Hygienist and not an Anatomist or Physiologist, you have set me a hard task, and even were I versed in the sciences of which I confess myself ignorant, you might not be, and so I should be just as badly off.

But let me tell you how to prove it to your own

satisfaction. Change clothes for one year. Let all the men begin at their heads and tie up their hair into twists and braids, frizzes, crimps, and bangs, and get a hat with a crown so small that long pins must be used to hold it in place, cut out the neck and cut off the sleeves of their shirts, get good strong glove-fitting corsets and draw them tight enough to cut off one half their breathing power and leave an ugly, ungraceful depression at the waist-line, put on a garment reaching from waist to feet that hinders a natural step and requires unceasing care to keep it dry and clean, and finish up with shoes set up on little pegs in the middle of the foot.

Let them adhere to this steadfastly for one year, except when they are sick in bed, and give the women their outfit—not even excepting their “rum and tobacco”—and if you then call for proof that woman’s dress is ruinous to health, I’ll muster the long array of doctors’ testimony which I have on hand. Perhaps I’d better bring on a little now, though I know it’s perfectly useless. You’ll read that the heart, lungs, stomach, and liver of four-fifths of our women are all “jammed to smash,” that their skirts are ruinously long and heavy, and if you are a woman you will look calmly up from

the page and tell your dressmaker to "take up the under-arm seams a little more and lengthen the skirt a trifle, as you heard they were going to wear them longer." If a man, probably you'll say, "I do hate to see a woman look like a slouch. I like a trim, tidy figure, and a skirt of graceful length." Nevertheless, I'll try to do my duty; and quote from the doctors.

Dr. Ellis says, in his work on "Avoidable Causes of Disease:" "This dreadful practice" (wearing tight clothes) has done more within the last century than war, pestilence, and famine, toward the physical deterioration of civilized man, I verily believe.

"More than this, I believe it is doing *more injury* to our race to-day, than *intemperance* in all its horrid forms. This habit grows upon the individual like the drunkard's thirst for whisky, and it soon becomes a necessity requiring to be steadily increased. The muscles of the body were intended to sustain it erect; but the very moment a lady applies a tight dress, it takes off the action of the muscles; in accordance with a well-known law of the muscular system, when they cease to be used they grow small and feeble. . . . The longer tight dressing has been continued, the more feeble and delicate these natural supports, and the person feels the

necessity continually of increasing the tightness of the dress to sustain the body erect.

“It is for this reason that no lady ever feels that she dresses too tight, any more than the rum-drinker feels that he drinks too much, unless she *suddenly* increases the force applied. She may even *destroy life* without actually feeling that her dress is too tight; in fact, feeling all the time that she dresses just tightly enough to make her feel right; that is, to give her proper support.”

I appeal to you, ladies to bear testimony, as you have so many times before, to the truth of these statements. How many times I've heard women say, “I couldn't live without my corsets. I feel as if I should fall all to pieces without them.” You use this as an argument in their favor, but it only proves that the muscles which ought to hold you firmly together, are so weakened that they cannot do their work, and the longer you keep on these artificial supports the weaker will you become. I don't know what would become of you if occasional fits of sickness did not compel you to take off your corsets and let nature have a chance to restore to these poor weakened muscles a little of their rightful freedom.

Dr. Ellis then speaks of the Indians who compress their skulls with heavy weights, and without admiring

their taste says that no serious consequences result, and continues: "Not so with the habit we are now considering; for if we judge as to the degree of evil . . . by the physical consequences which follow to our race, it is certainly one of the most fearful and deadly evils and sins in existence—compared to it *intemperance sinks into insignificance.*"

That's strong language. Anyone of a logical turn of mind can't help thinking, that of the women who went on the crusade against drunkenness and liquor-selling, probably nine tenths were, in their dress, guilty of as great a sin as they were trying so nobly to do away with. I often ask myself how long this shameful ignorance and lack of conscience in this respect must last. The great mass seems to be in worse than heathen darkness on this subject, and to enlighten them seems an impossibility from the fact that, as Dr. Ellis says, "No woman *feels* that her dress is too tight."

It does seem as if they might *see* if they don't feel. But I know a woman weighing one hundred and seventy-five pounds and fastening a twenty-four inch corset around her, who declares solemnly that she "has never laced;" that her form is "perfectly natural." And she even takes pride in that little waist set between her big

shoulders and hips. Verily "we are all like sheep gone astray, and there is no health in us."

If that woman's form is "perfectly natural," or, what she meant, just as it would have been if allowed to develop properly, I am thankful to say God doesn't allow many such monstrosities to be born into the world.

As many people neither feel nor see on this subject, I would they might hear and know, but they seem as unwilling to do these as they are unable to do the others.

With what earnestness Catherine Beecher speaks of the ills we suffer from this curse of improper dress: "That it is that has pressed like lead upon my heart and burned like fire in my bones, as for more than two years of debility, anxiety, and infirmity, I have been striving to bring this subject to the attention of the American people.

"There is no excitement of the imagination in what is here indicated." (She had previously said that the tortures inflicted on their victims by the most cruel inquisitors or barbarous savages were preferable to the slow, agonizing tortures caused by woman's dress). "If the facts and details *could* be presented they would

send a groan of terror and horror all over the land. For it is not one class or one section that is endangered. In every part of the country the evil is progressing."

Dr. James C. Jackson says, in "American Womanhood:" "In my practice I have probably had, from first to last, not less than five thousand women who have come to be examined for diseases of the lungs, of whom quite a proportion were in such a state as to render it out of the question for me to do them any good, they being thoroughly incurable. Yet of them all I believe there were not a dozen who were not dressed so tightly about the lungs as in course of time to insure pulmonary disease to any woman or man, however healthy, had such person been subjected to the constant wearing of just such a dress as these poor creatures wore at the time they sought relief at my hands."

M. Augusta Fairchild, M.D., says in her book, "How to be Well:" "I have thought that His 'Satanic Majesty' must find a source of great delight in the ruinous effect of his invention—the corset. Certainly a more effectual mode of destroying body and brain and of robbing the soul could not have been devised."

But I never was fond of copying. If you are interested in this matter you can get Dr. Dio Lewis' book

“Our Girls,” and find out why he would rather marry a hunchback, a squinter, a deaf mute, or a cripple, than a girl with a small waist. Get Dr. Trall’s book on “Digestion,” and Abba Gould Woolson’s book on “Dress Reform;” “What to Wear,” by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps; “Health Dress” and “The American Costume,” by Dr. Harriet N. Austin. And here I am reminded of something that makes me want to copy again. At an anniversary meeting at “Our Home” Hygienic Institute, Dr. Austin said: “If I permit *a single heart-beat* of mine to be diminished in its force by the ill-adjustment of my clothing, by so much I diminish my capability of doing. If I reduce *by the least* my breathing capacity, or disturb in *any measure* the uniformity of the circulation of the blood, or interfere with the least important organ in its free action, I thereby interpose an obstacle between my soul and the great world of knowledge and the grand heaven of spirituality. Thus clothing gets in the way of work, of culture, and of growth. It becomes an encumbrance, a burden, a bondage.”

O sister women! if we valued ourselves, our health, and usefulness as we ought, what a revolution we should make in this matter of dress!

CHAPTER III.

THUS far I have confined myself to corsets or tight dressing, and I feel foolish for having given them so much space; because any person has but to take a long *unrestrained* breath to appreciate the fact that there is no place on the body that so *imperatively* demands *freedom* as the very place our women and girls deprive of it by their dress. But, as Dr. Austin says, "Every woman understands that she cannot live without breathing; but few understand that if they but *half breathe* they can but *half live*, though this is actually the case." If we must have deformity, why can't we put boards on our heads like the flat-head Indians, or pinch up our feet like the Chinese. They certainly do not show themselves as silly nor as reckless of life and health as we. The simplest school textbooks of physiology teach us the necessity of perfect respiration and digestion; but where can we find a female teacher who is not so deformed as to render both of these impossible? With the teachers, the

preachers' wives, and the Christian mothers so misshapen, where shall the rising generation look for a model? I groan with groanings that cannot be uttered when I look into the future and see what must come, unless some merciful interposition shall stay this work of destruction. For at present enough corsets are manufactured to take the life out of a larger and stronger nation than ours.

Let us now pay our respects (?) to the shoes in which our enlightened and refined women hobble about. But what shall we say? What can be said that the shoe itself doesn't say? Let anybody take one of them and regard it attentively in comparison with a foot of natural shape, if such can be found, and tell us what must be the inevitable conclusion. Just look at the beautiful foot of a child, and then compare it with the peaked shoe-toe into which your foot must go. But never mind, ladies. Put them on. They're so tight and ill-shapen, they'll make corns and bunions, they interfere with the blood circulation so you'll have cold feet and headache, be nervous and irritable. The heels tilt you up so that your body as well as your feet are thrown entirely out of a natural position which cannot fail of inducing disease, more particularly in the abdominal region. And *such* walking?

See that little barefooted child with its graceful springy walk, and then a woman with a fashionable shoe on; such hobbling, twisting and jerking. Is *that* graceful?

But after all, what better can you do? I've tried for eight years to find a healthful shoe. I've had them made to order, worn them once and given them away. Nobody knows how to make a perfect shoe, though those which are manufactured by one store alone in New York come nearer perfection than any I have ever seen. Their shoes are perfect, with one exception—they have heels—though low and broad.

A shoe made just as they make them, only with no heel at all, would be perfect. It is altogether probable that God knew what he wanted when he adjusted the human body to the foot standing level. When we undertake to remedy His work we generally make a botch of it.

Read this from *Fashion Notes* in "The Golden Rule:" "There is a strong effort being made by the physicians to banish the high French heels. It is claimed by the medical fraternity that most of the nervous diseases from which women suffer at the present time are caused or aggravated, at least, by these heels. It is true that

nervous and spinal diseases are more prevalent than they ever have been, and that eye troubles are so frequent as to take almost the form of an epidemic, and it is claimed that much of this is traceable directly to French heels. They are uncomfortable things to walk on at the best, and spoil the most graceful gait, turning it into an affected mince."

"Oh, my heels are low," I've often heard people say. "They can't make any difference." I always reply, If you think they make no difference try walking with one shoe off and the other on, or with a slipper without a heel and a shoe with one, and you'll see that even a low heel does make a great difference. What shall we say, then, of a high one? I won't say anything but this: Women don't want such shoes as they ought to wear, and if they did, the shoemakers don't know how to, or will not make them.

A lady whom I know caught the heel of her shoe on the back-steps, and threw her down with such violence as to injure her for life—or at least it has been eight years since then, and she has suffered from the injury ever since. Another one caught the heel on a cellar stair and sprained her ankle, so she was laid up fourteen weeks.

CHAPTER IV.

I PROPOSE now to attack a foe who has been comparatively unmolested: In other words I intend to show the evils of long skirts. It is perfectly useless to fight corsets and other follies and wickednesses, while this enemy of health and freedom is allowed to go on with its ravages.

I must confess, at the start, my inability to bring so great a cloud of witnesses as I have on hand to testify against the corset. What I shall say, therefore, will mostly be "evolved from my inner consciousness."

Certain charges are made against long skirts. Let us investigate them. It is alleged that they are inconvenient, burdensome, dangerous to life and limb, unsuitable for any active exercise or occupation, ridiculous, extravagant, unhealthful, degrading, and wicked.

If in proving these allegations things sometimes seem a little mixed, it is the fault of the subject. For instance, I may be proving a long skirt unhealthful because it is inconvenient and burdensome, and yet seem

to be proving it inconvenient because it is burdensome and unhealthful, either of which it is easy to do.

In speaking of long skirts, I mean any skirt which comes *within twelve inches* of the ground.

When I have occasion to mention the part of the human frame which connects the knee with the foot what shall I call it, leg or lower limb? Why the word "leg," has been tabooed and "arm" allowed to retain its place, I fail to comprehend. If for custom's sake I write "lower limbs," for consistency's sake I ought to write "upper limbs" in indicating arms. That looks foolish, so I shall write "legs," and if it hurts anybody's feelings, they can substitute "lower limbs," in reading.

To begin, then: Woman's dress is inconvenient. Does that statement require any proof? Does anybody doubt it? Can anybody see a woman go up-stairs, into a carriage, into or out of a railway car, and doubt that her dress is inconvenient? Can a woman go out in rain or snow and not convince you that her dress is inconvenient?

I've seen the time when my dress made it very inconvenient for me to occupy a car seat which had first been vacated by a tobacco chewer, but in such cases I put the blame where it belongs, on the tobacco. At

the same time I cannot fail to see that the floor of any car isn't clean enough to make it an acceptable place on which to lay a clean dress and petticoat, but it must be done—that is, if we have succeeded in keeping them clean till the station is reached, which is very doubtful.

Can anybody watch a crowd going out of a car and not be confirmed in the conviction that woman's dress is inconvenient? How carefully we must step, how long we must wait while the woman ahead of us takes her dress out of the way and takes a lot of mud with it. A car which contains only men will unload in about one fifth of the time it takes a car load of women.

But with all these facts staring her in the face I did know one woman who declared her dress was "not inconvenient. She never thought of it; it wasn't in her way *at all*," She is the only one I ever knew who denies the charge of inconvenience. Everybody else that I ever talked with admits that. I was visiting in her house. She lived on the second floor, and kept her wood and coal in the cellar. One day I heard a great rattlety bang in the back hall. I opened the door, and the woman who "never thought of her dress" rose up with a very red face out of a promiscuous looking pile of

wood. She said she "stumbled and fell up-stairs; possibly she stepped on her dress."

Of course I was too magnanimous to remind her that her dress was never in her way, but I did gently allude to it a few days after, when she spent an hour darning up a big hole in the front breadth of her best dress, which she stepped on and tore in trying to carry her Sunday bonnet up-stairs.

By the way, ladies, wouldn't you like to be able to carry up-stairs your hat, shawl, parasol, fan, travelling-bag, the big bundle, the little bundle, and a kerosene lamp all at once?

You can do it and not lose your temper nor put yourself in the shape of a kangaroo, if you'll cut twelve inches off of the bottom of your dress.

Isn't it worth something to be so dressed that you can with ease carry up-stairs the baby and lamp at the same time? Would you not rather step easily and gracefully into a carriage or up steps or into a street-car, than to go hesitating, halting, and stumbling as you do at present?

And right here I want to bring in a physician's testimony on the health part of the question. Charles F. Taylor, M.D., of New York, says: "A short succession

of sudden trips, missteps, or blunders will speedily exhaust even the strongest man. And there is no doubt but that the present style of long skirts for ladies' dresses, requiring as it does constant, uncertain, often unsuccessful efforts to snatch the skirt away from the advancing feet, to keep them from tripping; the getting into stages and ascending stairs in crouching unsteady attitudes, holding up the dress meantime, require such a fearful expenditure of nervous energy, that it is of itself sufficient in many cases to bring on a train of the most distressing symptoms."

You may say that this language does not apply to the style of dress now known as the walking-dress, but nearly all of it does. Even if it does not, of what avail is that? Before another six months fashion may dictate longer dresses, and nineteen out of twenty women will put them on.

Of course a dress which leaves the feet and hands free on level surfaces is better than one which enslaves them *all* the time; but how much better one which leaves them free all the time.

I remember asking a girl who was carrying food upstairs to a sick person, "Why don't you go faster?"

"I can't," she answered. "I have to use both hands

to carry the waiter, so I can't step up but one stair at a time, and then my dress gets under my feet unless I'm very careful." She never complained; thought it was all just as it should be, and was horrified at the idea of a dress up to her knees.

Of course you all know that woman's dress is an inconvenience—all but the lady who fell up-stairs with the wood. The trouble lies in this; you take it as a matter of course, as the natural order of things, that she be subjected to such inconvenience. It's a mistake, ladies, a mistake; and you'll find out so one of these bright mornings.

Let us consider the burdensomeness of woman's dress. First, why do the female pedestrians wear dresses to their knees? Is it to make an exhibition, and simply that? No; it is because long dresses would tire them out in a few hours. My heart gave a great throb of hope when they first started out. I said to myself, now, surely, the press will bring this fact prominently before the people and emphasize it. They will endeavor to make women understand what a burden and hinderance their clothes are. But instead of that, what did the newspapers do? They set up a howl for the women to walk. They said, "Women don't walk enough." They said, "These female

pedestrians have demonstrated that women can walk, and women *ought* to walk more." But not one of them that I saw made any allusion to the fact that the reason these women could walk was because they wore broad-soled shoes with no heels, and were unincumbered with skirts. Why did they not ask the women, "Don't you see what you must do, if you are to gain any benefit from walking?" Was ignorance or knavery at the bottom of this neglect of such an opportunity to help them out of their bondage?

One lady with whom I talked about the walkers said, "Of course they can walk easier in their short dresses."

If they can, we can, I replied.

"Oh, well, we don't have to walk off fifty or sixty miles."

Perhaps not; but we do not have all the time a dry level track to walk on. We must go up hill and down, in doors and out, up and down stairs, through wind and rain, dust and mud. And with *every* step lift an unnecessary weight.

Did you ever watch a woman walk with this in your mind? If you never did, I wish you would for a little while stand in front of some large dry-goods

store and see how with every step a woman lifts a mess of ruffles, lace, fringe, perhaps bugle trimming. If it doesn't tire you to think of it, I'm mistaken.

I was watching a lady one day who took longer steps than is common for ladies. Usually they have accommodated their gait to their dress, and only step about half as far as they would if they had always been free. They "walk mincing as they go." As Mrs. Oliphant says in her book on dress, "a lady does not want to stride."

Well, it's always a good thing to accommodate your wants to your necessities, but the lady of whom I speak evidently wanted to take herself over the ground at a pace faster than a snail's. I asked my companion, How much would that lady lift in walking half a mile, supposing she lifts one half of a pound at every step?

He figured a little and said, "Six hundred and fifty pounds." Of course, half of a pound was the lowest estimate that could be put upon the weight of the clothing she lifted upon her heels and knees, but even at that what a silly expenditure of strength.

I grow impatient as I proceed, to think women will do so, and I'll close the "burdensome" part of my subject with a quotation from "The American Costume,"

by Harriet N. Austin, M.D. "It is difficult for persons to realize how decidedly the manner of walking of a girl becomes changed from the time she lays aside her short dress and pantalets and puts on the dress of a woman. Up to that point she has been allowed her natural freedom, and her walk is as easy and graceful as that of a boy; but the manner in which her long drapery is related to her lower limbs is such that from the moment she adopts it, grace of motion is impossible and every step she takes is under restraint.

Farther on, speaking of women whom she has seen in the American Costume for the first time, she says "The first exclamation which one makes under such circumstances is, 'What shall I do with my legs? I do not know how to walk.' And this is exactly the state of the case. She *does not know how to walk*. . . . It is as if a man who had had his hands fettered for years should have them loosened, and he should be required immediately to perform with precision the gestures of an orator."

Does it need any argument to convince a person who thinks at all, that such inconvenience and constraint must be injurious to health? Get the opinion of physiologists on the subject. They will tell you that to so change the style of walking as to force some muscles

to much more work than they were intended for, and leaving others almost unused, cannot fail to have a bad effect on the general system.

In a tract entitled "The Weak Backs of American Women," Dr. James C. Jackson says, in speaking of women in long skirts, "Every time the leg is lifted and thrown back a little in order to get a momentum whereby it can put itself forward, the skirt presents itself in the shape of an obstacle just at the knee. The result is that instinctively and unconsciously to the wearer the body sets itself to work to escape from the difficulty, and soon a habit of walking is instituted which transfers all the motional energies from below, to the point of the junction of the limbs with the trunk of the body. This style of walking becomes peculiar—is unlike the natural gait, and compels a set of muscles to over-action. While activity within proper limits *develops* muscular tissue and strengthens it, over-action *debilitates* and *weakens* it; and here lies one of the *chief causes* of weakness and soreness of the back, of which our women complain."

But the long skirt does not stop its evil work with forcing an unhealthful style of walking. It does one of two things—either of which is bad enough—it compels

a woman to remain in-doors in bad weather and bad walking or else have her ankles wet. Will you undertake to estimate—I will not—how many women and girls have destroyed health and life by wearing damp skirts around their ankles hour after hour? Into the store, factory, school-room and sewing-room they go with their heavy clinging folds inducing discomfort, disease, and death.

Besides these indirect and sometimes long-coming injuries, the long skirt often directly endangers life and limb. Can you not call to mind some woman of your acquaintance who has been badly hurt in attempting to jump from a carriage drawn by frightened horses because her skirts caught and held, or so entangled her that she could not free herself for a good jump?

Who does not know that in accidents at sea many a woman is lost, and many a man in trying to save her, just because of that stupendous folly—skirts? Though, as Miss Phelps says, after enumerating a long list of the evils of woman's dress, "when I think of these things, I feel that I have passed from follies into the category of crimes." Yea, verily; if suicide and the bringing of disease and misery upon ourselves and our children be crimes.

I am glad to be able to show you that Anna Dickinson is not asleep on this subject, as so many people wide awake to the interests of humanity in other directions seem to be. For this purpose I quote the following from her "Ragged Register."

"Three of the party encased against wind and weather, unfashionable and picturesque; the fourth member of the organization arrayed in a soft felt hat, blue costume, consisting of loose coat, skirt to the knee, Turkish trousers, woollen stockings, and stout shoes. So armed and equipped we *bestrode* our beasts, and were away to the Yosemite, not, however, till we were joined by another party bound to the same destination, one of the ladies surveying *our* lady with disdain, and audibly desiring her companions to 'look at that vulgar creature.'

"And the vulgar creature, from her safe and comfortable and *natural* seat, surveyed the wretched 'ladies' horses,' sore of back, lame of leg; beheld the girthing and tightening and fussing over the groaning and miserable creatures, the lift into the saddles, the ungainly bags of figures composed of half-long skirts and clumsy 'waterproofs,' the twisted bodies and uncomfortable attitudes,—took a mental look ahead at the

twelve hours' ride over rough and dangerous roads, smiled to herself, and thought, 'look at those idiots.'

"Sensible and foolish, we started, and rode hour after hour through solemn aisles of majestic trees, till, toward the close of the afternoon, we reached open ground, where broke upon us the overture to the great harmony toward which we tended—a sight to take one's breath, yet merely the vestibule of the King's Temple beyond.

"'Here,' said the guide, 'we begin the descent to the valley.'

"And we *descended*.

"Mesdames, the critics, indulged in a good deal of screaming, slipped at divers points, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes involuntarily, from their horses, walked over the roughest places, summoned guides and masculine friends to lead their animals, to render help of voice and hand, embraced neck and mane of their four-legged servants, till the poor beasties having this misery added to their torturing girths must have almost smothered, and held on to saddle and pommel till hands, arms, and chests were strained to numbness.

"And no wonder!

"Said Cushing, my tall, long-limbed, bright-haired,

wide-awake guide, who had bestrode everything from a circus horse to a bucking Indian pony — said Cushing, after jerking over and tightening down for the twentieth time, one of the one-sided leather abominations, ‘There ain’t dust enough’ (*gold* dust, innocent friends!) ‘lying round loose to hire me to ride on one of those things.’

“‘Afraid of your neck?’ said I.

“‘You bet,’ said he.”

I am not able to find words to express my idea of the folly of riding “side-saddle” and in a fashionable riding habit, so I’ve merely italicized “bestrode” in the extract from Miss Dickinson.

CHAPTER V.

By turning to Chapter III. you will find certain charges preferred against long skirts. Part of these have been attended to, and I suppose that no one who has read thus far doubts that woman's dress is inconvenient, burdensome, and, for these and other causes, unhealthful. But the worst is yet to come.

What! can there be a greater objection to a style of dress than its unhealthfulness? Yea, verily—worse even than the death which so often results from its unhealthfulness. When I say the dress is extravagant, unfit for any active exercise or occupation, degrading, ridiculous and wicked I have said a worse thing than to say it is unhealthful. It *is* degrading, because it is ridiculous, extravagant, and unfit for active exercise or occupation. It degrades women socially, financially, physically, morally, spiritually. It does more to keep alive—and, alas! to keep true, too—the idea of woman's inferiority than any other thing.

I want to quote a little from the daily papers to show

in what estimation we are held on account of our clothes—even in this Christian and enlightened nation. The following article appeared September, 1879.

“OPENING DAY.”

“The world has heard something about the sorrows of woman and of her inability to participate in many privileges and pleasures peculiar to the ruder sex; but it is the *firm conviction of the beings who have to foot the bills that man has no delight* which equals that which is every spring and fall provided for ladies by our thoughtful, chivalrous, and disinterested merchants. ‘Opening Day’ they call it; but never before did poetic license stretch a little word to such a magnificent extent. Day? Why an old-fashioned Christmas, with its twelve times twenty-four hours, was not so long, so prolific of surprises, so abounding in big bundles and—to the masculine vision—bigger bills. Along Broadway and other streets containing stores that ladies most frequent, the crowd during the past week has been almost as dense as that at the walking match; carriages have been as numerous on many a square as if some highly fashionable marriage or funeral was in progress; cash boys have had to tramp so incessantly and rapidly that they are seriously wondering

if they might not safely offer Rowell odds, and matches—although for rings instead of belts—have been planned over bewitching articles of feminine adornment with a degree of secrecy and skill that exceeds anything whispered about at the Madison Square Garden. Why last year's robe, cloak, bonnet, or laces may not as well be worn again this winter as the apparel which men are now arousing from its summer rest is something which man may wonder about but never ask. He finds frequent occasion to remark that his business is not all he could wish it to be, and his home partner honestly says *she is sorry*; he drops hints about interest which he has to pay and mortgages to take up, and his daughters wonder that poor dear papa doesn't go wild over his engagements; he casually mentions the aggregate amount of school bills, doctors' accounts, and church dues for which he is called upon, and the ladies with one voice declare for rigid economy. Then the head of the family goes to his office and the gentler members stroll out, merely to see what is new in the stores.

“When the *lord* of that household returns in the afternoon to his dinner he finds stacks of packages in the hallway; when he goes again to his office he finds sheaves of bills; and there are questionings at home and ex-

planations, and perhaps a tear or two; and a fortnight later, the old gentleman, beholding his *newly arrayed* family as they gather in the parlor before going to wedding or party, declares to himself that they have outdone themselves as well as their friends, *and that he was an old brute to murmur at the expense.*"

"Oh well," you say, "no American wrote that. That's the emanation from the stolid and brutal brain of some newly imported Turk."

Softly! softly. If your statement is true, they had a "newly imported Turk" in the editorial department of the *New York Herald*, for that appeared in its editorial columns.

But, Christian or Turk, when I read that I wondered if a greater insult and humiliation could be offered to women. They are here represented as wholly given up to the pleasures of apparel. The "ruder sex," with every avenue open to them through which noble work can be done, are said to "find no delight equal to that found by women in 'opening day.'"

His home partner *honestly* says she is sorry," and he leaves us to infer one of two things: either she is sorry because she fears she will not have money enough to spend on her clothes, which shows her to be heart-

less and selfish, or she is so stupid as not to see that she ought to curtail her expenses. The daughters are represented as "gentle idiots," to use Mark Twain's phrase—and yet the "*lord* of that household," who knows that "*his* darlings cannot be more altogether lovely," than they were last year, is perfectly satisfied when he beholds his "newly arrayed family" and thinks, "he was an old brute to murmur at the expense."

I think he was an old brute anyway — murmur or no murmur, to confess himself satisfied if women only look well, even if they are destitute of hearts and brains.

Ye gods! what a picture of American homes, American womanhood, yea, and American manhood. What are those women but slaves? *He* "foots the bills." Petted slaves usually, but sometimes "questioned" to the extent of bringing "a tear or two."

What is "the old gentleman" but master?—indulgent usually, but sometimes, when the bills come in, stern.

"Ah, it makes me to shudder and grow sick at heart," to see the press, which ought to aim for the elevation and inspiration of the people, prostituted to so base purposes.

Women, I appeal to you. Are you willing to be

taken at the same value as any beautiful Circassian? Are you ready to ignore the fact that you are capable of knowing, feeling, understanding, and to have your fathers and husbands ignore it? Oh, come up higher!

Let us look further at the daily press and see what the New York *Sun* has for us. In its issue of September 10, 1879, its "Ladies' Department" contains the following:

"The only rule for color selection, with a view to its becomingness or unbecomingness, is to test the question before the looking-glass, both by daylight and gas-light. Take the piece of goods into the fitting-room of the house where you make your purchase, and try the effect of the color by holding up the piece of goods next to your face. Do the same with the felt hat or bonnet you propose to buy, and also with the trimmings of the same. The ribbons, bows, scarfs, and gloves to wear with your various toilets must be submitted to the same test. It takes time and patience and an eye for color to do all this, but it will repay you *in the satisfaction afforded in the final results*. For if it is worth while to spend the money for all these pretty things, it is certainly worth while to take the time to choose them judiciously."

There's work laid out for you, my pretty little slaves, noble work—befitting your capabilities. Your *sphere* is defined. You cannot study, for your instructor—this same New York *Sun*, in a paper which came out within a week of this one, contained quite a lengthy article on “Girls who study too hard.” It labors to prove that it is folly for the “weaker sex” to attempt intellectual competition with the “stronger,” which I am ready at once to admit, if, in addition to the intellectual work, she must do all the work laid out for her in the article quoted. But I will not for one instant admit that if women had an equal chance for exercise and were required to spend no more thought, time, and care on their clothes than is required by male students, they would not *fully* equal them in intellectual attainments. What they have done while laboring under all their disadvantages is ample proof of all that I affirm—or rather deny.

Who shall think of these things and not acknowledge that woman's dress degrades her? Truly the daily press would make her seem to be of very little account.

As an illustration of how valuable her time is considered, read this from another daily: “It is a pretty

and not uncommon sight on the Shrewsbury to see young city belles rigged out in dainty toilets suitable for a ballroom, holding scoop-nets in their delicately kid-gloved hands, and exclaiming with delight when they succeed in capturing a poor little crab."

The New York *Express* rates women intellectually as follows: "Mr. Garfield has subscribed for the *Literary World*, and from the fuss its editors make over the accession to its subscription list, we would infer that it is chiefly taken by 'women, children, idiots, and Indians not taxed.'"

How long shall we be treated in this way? Just so long as women spend their time as they do now. A fashionable woman can do little else but dress. A woman who attempts to do anything else, weighted down and entangled with such clothes as women now wear, does it at such a loss of power as of necessity to render her inferior in *some* respect.

If women ever expect to compete with men in anything but self-sacrifice, a better system of handicapping than is at present in vogue must be adopted.

Dr. James C. Jackson says: "The construers of the gospel, the interpreters of law, the expounders of the constitution, the organizers of public opinion, hitherto

have conspired to make her believe that in thus forswearing her freedom, and foregoing all efforts to enjoy it, and in putting on and wearing everywhere, like an enforced convict, a dress that indicates unmistakably her apostacy from freedom and the dignity of labor, she is giving the clearest evidence of her true appreciation of womanhood. So long as she does or can be made to believe this falsehood, and act under it, man will be her superior, and govern the world, though she were to vote a dozen ballots to his one."

True, O doctor! and its been an unceasing wonder to me that women will yield voluntary servitude of the most abject kind to fashion, and yet resist and rebel against political inequality.

If women ever expect to be the acknowledged equals of men in any profession or occupation they must know as much as men—have as much power. And power isn't mere muscle in these days, though that's a good representation of it.

I cannot find better words to express the financial condition in which women place themselves by the course they take in regard to dress, than I have already used in the following article in the *Woman's Journal*:

UNEQUAL WAGES FOR MEN AND WOMEN—WHY?

While deeply deploring the fact that a woman's time is held at a much smaller value than a man's, and keenly feeling its injustice, I cannot wonder at it as long as women apparel themselves in a way that logically advertises them as not useful even if not ornamental, and at the same time, as a rule, consent to spend so much time in ornamenting that attire. Talking on Women's Rights a few days ago with a man who goes every day to the city in a railroad train, I made some remark which called from him the statement that, 'Everything about woman indicates that her place is at home—even her dress. What woman wants to go to the city every day? Why, my ulster is in my way every time I step up into the cars.' And he repeated that 'woman's place is at home.' When I suggested that woman might adopt a style of dress that would not interfere with business calls, he quickly responded: 'Women were made to be ornamental.' Well, perhaps that is true. Is it? If it is, perhaps the women are doing well—'fulfilling their mission'—who spend one half their time in adorning themselves, and the other half in exhibiting the result of their labors. If untrue,

every woman who dresses herself in clothes which interfere with the free use of her powers—that of locomotion with the rest—is helping to sustain a delusion.

So long as women are regarded as mere ornaments (though I believe that oftener than otherwise that flattering (?) argument is used to blunt the point of some keen thrust) they will be considered usurpers when they take up business.

Though we cannot if we would ignore the noble women who in spite of their handicapping have 'won the race'—we cannot help remembering how many have fallen by the way who might have run to victory had they been as lightly and conveniently attired as their male competitors. It cannot be denied that a man presents himself for a position in clothes which are so constructed as to be but little hinderance to him in any work he may undertake. This is not true of woman, but almost the reverse is. Of course justice requires that shall not affect the estimate put on a woman's work if, with these odds against her, she works like a man; but I think no one will consider the matter candidly without coming to the conclusion that it does. The great majority of women do not equip themselves nor spend their time as if they 'meant busi-

ness;' and until they do we cannot look for much improvement in the matter under consideration. Though neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet I confidently predict that something much nearer equality than now exists in the dress of men and women will precede the much desired equality in wages. Either men must put on corsets, skirts, laces, feathers and flowers, or women must put them off. Which will it be? or is a compromise possible?

Dr. Richardson, of London, in his lecture on dress says: "Of late women have raised the cry, and that too quite properly, that they are too much subjected to the will of men; but, in fact, *no subjection to which they have ever submitted* can be greater than that to fashion in dress. If to-morrow women were placed in all respects on equality with men they would remain under subjection to *superior mental and physical forces* so long as they cripple their constitutions by this one practice of cultivating, under an atrocious view of what is beautiful, a form of body which is destructive of development of body, which reduces physical power, and which thereby deadens mental capacity."

Dr. Richardson thinks the corset alone enough to keep women slaves, and he may be right, but how he or

any other dress reformer can overlook the fact that the long skirt is at the bottom of all these other atrocities in dress is passing strange. Let a woman be as free to walk and go about in all weathers as a man, and you strike a death blow to her corsets and her slavery at the same time. She will find her feet going faster than pinched up lungs can supply breath for. She will find such inspiration in her new-found freedom that she will strive for more and more.

To put men and women into the same kind of clothes would do more towards equalizing them than all the ballots they could stuff into a box from now till next year.

Seeing is believing, and so long as woman looks as inferior as her dress now makes her look she will be believed inferior. She can't know, nor do, nor be very much till she changes her clothes, for its rowing up stream to all the time try to excel with those about you believing you will fail.

It is useless to talk that women were made to be ornamental. You know and I know that the majority of women *have* to work—and I know that every woman, and man too, *ought* to work at something.

And why will women not fit themselves for it? Why

will dress reformers cater to this sickly weak fancy and do their best to make their reformed women look like others? A change in looks is what we want. Having once made such a declaration of independence you are free. So why not come out square? You dress reformers, every one of you, know that the long skirt is the stronghold of the enemy, and if you think you'll ever succeed in taking it by manœuvre and strategy you're mistaken. You may advertise and wear reform underclothing for ten thousand years, and when it comes to getting rid of long skirts there'll be a hard fight. Why not be done with all this skirmishing and have it now? It's as easily done to-day as it can ever be done; and it wins the whole battle. That lays the axe at the root of the tree instead of chopping off twigs here and there. Are you afraid of being called strong-minded? Would you rather be ranked with "idiots, paupers, and Indians who are not taxed," than to be called strong-minded? Remember there is an *opposite* to every thing, as sour and sweet, good and bad, strong and weak. No one denies this fact, and yet it is often practically ignored. For instance: One day a friend of mine in conversation with a gentleman said or did something which drew from him, apparently before he thought, a remark some-

thing like this: "I see you're a little—well—not exactly strong-minded but, uh—"

"Then he paused, and my friend exclaimed in real or feigned indignation, "Do you mean to intimate that I am weak-minded?"

Surprise overspread his countenance, and it seemed slowly to dawn on his benighted understanding that strong-minded has its opposite.

Whoever sees a woman in a dress which leaves her free to walk as God made her to walk at once declares her to be a strong-minded woman. If a short dress is recognized as an unfallible sign of a strong-minded woman please tell me, judging by the law of opposites, what a long dress is a sign of.

No wonder we are ranked with idiots and paupers, etc. We ought to be if we are afraid or ashamed to be called strong-minded.

CHAPTER VI.

The New York *Daily Advertiser* says: "It is to be regretted that the Princess Louise will not be at home on the 1st of January. We had intended paying our respects, and our low neck and short sleeve reception dress-coat is just too sweet for anything."

I thought right here that I would attempt to prove that woman's dress is ridiculous, but, after all, wouldn't it be like making an argument to prove that the sun shines?

Watch a woman out on a grassy croquet lawn at "dewy morn or dewy eve," trying to keep her dress from the wet grass. I don't know of anything more ridiculous. Yes, I do, too. I'll tell you. See here, Sarah Jane, what would you think if James Henry should work a week and three days on a dress and every once in a while hold it up admiringly and say, "*Isn't* that lovely? but oh, how my side aches. This flounce headed with the passementerie and lace is just too sweet for anything, but my eyes and head do ache fearfully."

Now, honestly, Sarah Jane, what *would* you think if he should do so, and when the dress was done put it on and march out carrying the greater part of it on his arm or in his hand?

“Well, to tell the truth, I should think he wath ath thoft ath thquath.”

Right, Sarah Jane. Now, tell me what you think of yourself when you do that way.

“Why I—I—I’m only a girl.”

Only a girl! but you ought to have common sense if you are. Maybe that’s of no consequence, if you’re only happy; and the *Meriden Recorder* says: “‘How shall we train our girls?’ asked an exchange. Train ’em with about twenty-two yards of black silk, if you want to please your girls. A silk velvet train would also make ’em happy.”

I want to ask you one more question, though. Do you know of anything that is foolish for James Henry to do that would not be foolish for you? Wouldn’t it be just as foolish for you to strut down street with a cigar in your mouth, and spoil the air for everybody within twenty feet of you, as it is for him? Wouldn’t, it be just as foolish for you to stay up half the night and play billiards as it is for him? Wouldn’t it be just

as foolish for you to stand around on the street corners spitting tobacco juice and making remarks about the passers by?

“I thuppothe it would.”

“Right again, Sarah Jane, and I think you see by this time that you are both human beings and what is foolish for one can't be sensible for the other.

And now, as to the extravagance of woman's dress. Wait, wait; don't stop up your ears and shut your eyes to a fact, even if you have “heard it over and over again till you're tired of it.” Read a paragraph from the *Evening Telegram*.”

“FIFTH AVENUE AND THE PARK.”

“*A Brilliant Scene—Throngs of People Abroad on the First Sunday of the Indian Summer—Splendid Display of Dress.*”

“Fifth Avenue in the afternoon of yesterday, the first Sunday of the Fall season, wore its old-time look of fashionable life and brilliancy. About one o'clock the numerous churches along the street emptied themselves of their crowded congregations, and for two hours afterward the west side of the avenue was covered with a

slowly moving mass of expensively apparelled humanity. The prevailing texture of dress was black silk, trimmed with velvet, and all velvet dresses in black, royal purple, and deep green were not infrequent. The crowds that sailed slowly down the avenue must have impressed a foreigner greatly with the degree of wealth, taste, and beauty in this metropolis of the New World. Not an ill or poorly attired person was to be met with on this thoroughfare of fashion, and if the foreigner was to take his impressions of New York alone from a stroll on the avenue in the afternoon of yesterday, he would conclude that this must be a city inhabited by nabobs."

This writer says "the numerous churches along the street emptied themselves." Farther on he says, "Not an ill or poorly attired person was to be met with." One thing is certain: The poor did not have the gospel preached to them in those churches that day. And I could not help wondering if those Christian people realize what an impassable barrier they hold up between themselves and poor people. Is it done intentionally? If not, what *can they be thinking about?*

Is it any wonder that the poor and ignorant reason as follows—

“ Two ragged urchins stood one day
 Beside the great church door,
 And watched the folks in rich array
 From out the temple pour.

‘ My eyes ! but ain’t they tony though !
 And don’t they sport the dress !
 What be they, Joe ? ’ ‘ Oh, I dunno—
 They’re Christian folks, I guess. ’

‘ They be ! Then, if we had the cash,
 And nothing else to do,
 And washed, and dressed, and cut a dash—
 Should we be Christians, too ? ’

—*Boston Transcript.*

Think you, if Jesus Christ had come to the poor in magnificent splendor, he could have so won their hearts as to have been their hope and consolation for eighteen hundred years ? Ah no. And can his followers succeed where he would have failed ?

But to go back for a moment to the Sunday splendor of Fifth Avenue. Suppose “ the foreigner ” leaving the fashionable thoroughfare and wending his way to Green or Baxter streets. What would he conclude of the city then ? O woman, in your fine clothes, did you think of those poor wretches ?

“ Yes,” you say, and I’ve given a great deal for charitable purposes.

You'll have call to give for charitable purposes, so long as you set the example you do now. Let me tell you about this; I knew a young girl who lived away from the metropolis. She used to go often to the little country church, and she knew that the pastor was poorly paid, and she knew the church was in debt. Every Sunday a contribution was taken up and the pastor plead with the people to "give something, if not more than a penny. Give what you are able to give." And this young girl saw that ten prominent women in that church had on clothes and jewelry enough to pay the whole debt. What could she conclude but that clothes were of more account than anything else? What did she do? She went away to the city and sold herself—body and soul.

Then she came back to the little town in her fine clothes, thinking herself as good as the other ladies. And who dare say she was not? How did you get your money, madam? Did you work and earn it, or did you marry some man your soul abhorred for the sake of having his money?

It seems to me if any women ought to have good clothes it is that class who work just for clothes, but I once heard of the wife of a wealthy man in a thriv-

ing manufacturing town who said she wished the *shop-girls* were obliged to wear aprons to distinguish them from the *ladies*.

I should think the shop-girls would want something to distinguish them from such ladies, shouldn't you?

Do "the ladies" ever think what they might do for the shop-girls if social distinctions were abolished? Do those who have so much money that their only care is to buy the best they can find ever think that those with less money are struggling hard to dress just as well, and that those still poorer are straining every nerve to keep up a respectable appearance? Do you, madam, when you try to get a seven dollar silk for five dollars and tell what a bargain you made—do you stop to think that this greed for dress is grinding the face of the poor?

A merchant cannot afford to pay his clerk as well, the manufacturer cannot pay his workman as well, as they could do if you were willing to put less cloth in a dress and pay just as much for it. Perhaps you will reply that the merchant and manufacturer would keep the profits, so the clerk and workman would not be any better off.

Why would the merchant and manufacturer keep the

money, instead of paying their help a fair profit? Because they wish their wives to follow your example, and wear the most expensive clothes they can get.

And so it goes. But, "what shall the harvest be?" What *is* the harvest? we might better ask, for the reaping has begun. A great crop of forgers, embezzlers, dishonest politicians, lying merchants, oppressive manufacturers, and ministers who dare not preach what they believe for fear they will not have sufficient support to enable them to live in style.

Now, is all the blame for this to be put on women?

No, not all. There are too many men who want their wives and daughters to advertise for them how successful they are in business, and take great pride in seeing them "well dressed;" but it is true that the prevailing extravagance of women is very active in urging men on in this inglorious scramble after wealth. Virtually they are saying, "Get money honestly if you can, but get money." Ah me! in marrying, how many women ignore a lack of honesty, temperance, chastity, and honor!

This extravagance is helping to undermine the very foundations of honest government and good society. Our sons and brothers are being led to ruin by the false stand-

ards of womanhood placed before them in the person of mother or sister.

I read, last winter, of a New York woman who appeared in Washington wearing \$800,000 worth of diamonds. Is that right? I say to that woman and all like her, you have made the name of woman a proverb, a byword and a reproach, by your heartless frivolity, vanity, foolishness, and love of display and money; so that even the women who are not as you are must labor under the load of shame which you bring upon them. You allow such an estimate to be put upon us that all women who have true self-respect must blush for their sex. Do, for God's sake, take off your foolish clothes and ornaments and try to be of some use in the world.

But this extravagant love of display is by no means confined to the rich. Go into our public schools and look at the teachers and the girls. [The boys are better dressed. Why, we shall inquire hereafter.] Look at the over-skirts, plattings, and rufflings, folds and "bias pieces," then tell me if the sewing-machine, which woman should have made an inestimable blessing, has not been turned to a bitter curse. Think of all the extra sewing on those garments. Think of the work of washing and ironing them. Then go to the mothers and ask them if

they have visited the school this term ; if they have read this, that, or the other ; if they have answered that letter, or studied up that hygienic subject, and they'll tell you, "No ; I don't do anything. It takes all my time to keep the children from looking like beggars."

And they'll keep on just so ; sweating and fretting and plodding all day till—when ? Till they die perhaps, but I hope not. There must be something innately strong and good in the human understanding if it can come up through childhood under all this tremendous pressure, to convince it that first, last, and in the middle clothes are the only *really* important thing, and yet have any conception that there *are* things of real value besides clothes and the money to buy them with. I doubt if it can, and I am filled with sad foreboding for the rising generation.

When I was a little girl and went to school, I wore, in winter, a flannel dress with a plain hem, and over that a long-sleeved apron, of calico, or gingham, also with a plain hem. I learned my lessons as well, was as polite and well-behaved as if I had been covered with trimming, and, I think, more so. My teachers dressed with the same plainness, but I thought them perfectly lovely. My oldest sister was married in a dress composed of eleven

yards of narrow silk. The sole trimming on it was a row of "lace gimp" on the sleeves. But let a woman marry in the same station in life now, and how many yards of silk must she have?

It's outrageous extravagance that puts twenty-five or thirty yards into a dress when twelve would answer the purpose far better. A fashionable woman—and who isn't fashionable since sewing-machines and paper patterns have come?—piles on an immense amount of clothing, which answers no purpose at all but to disfigure and burden her.

But shall we dwell longer on the extravagance of woman's dress. It's a dreary subject. It's a discouraging subject. It makes a thoughtful person wonder if women were made simply to exhibit the products of the worm, the sheep, and the cotton plant. It must be very flattering to the worm, the sheep, and the cotton plant if they could know it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIFFERENCE.

THE words of my text may be found in the third column of the fourth page of the *Boston Post*:

“We learn that Marie had five car-loads of clothes when she was married, and we haven't even heard of Alfonso's having a new undershirt.”

Now, Marie—or Sarah Jane, you will suit my purpose better, and you do the same way—I want to try and find out what this means. Can you tell me? What did you have five car-loads of clothes for, and Alfonso—or James Henry—not even have a new undershirt? Are you bigger than he is; or what reason is there for such a difference?

“He did have a new undershirt, but it was not heard of,” you say.

Why should we not hear of his clothes as well as yours? There's a question, not for you only, but for the whole civilized world. Can anybody see why a woman's

clothes should occupy so much more room, time, and attention than a man's?

In the January number of the *Laws of Life*, its editor, Fannie B. Johnson, writes "Why and Why." It is an article that every person who has arrived at an age to understand it ought to read. I give a few extracts: "Why should a man have but five buttons on his vest and a woman thirteen? Why should he have room under his vest for the full play of his lungs, . . . and under her vest there be so little room that the ribs cannot part to let the lungs play, and thus, while she has twice or thrice as many buttons as he, she can get only a half or third as much vital air?"

Does anyone dare reply to this that it is their own choice?

Is it possible that women do not appreciate air, but do appreciate buttons?

Again, "Why should she drag ball and chain in the form of trains heavy loaded with folds, flounces, and linings, and of skirt over skirt, all weighted with dry goods, while his limbs carry no more than is needed for protection and warmth? Why should his feet have 'free course to run'—why did she not add "and be glorified?"—while hers are kept under petticoats? . . .

Why should not the *idea* of protection to the eyes and frontal brain pertain in the making of her hat as in his? In her case it may or may not be; in his it is never lost sight of. . . .

Why is conventional propriety made a strait-jacket for women and girls, and a loose mantle for men and boys? Why, when a wife works hard as her husband, should he hold the purse-strings and she be made a beggar for his charity? . . . Common questions, easily asked, but who shall truly answer them? Whoever would find the right answer must dig down to the foundations on which society rests. He will find a great many *rotten beams* there, the stones *crumbling* and *mouldy*, and withal *a rank order of heathenism.*" I have only taken a few sample sentences from the article, every word of which was precious, and when I read it I "thanked God and took courage."

My courage was not gone when a few days after an old-school physician said to me, "I like your dress very much. It would add much to the health of women if they would all wear it." (I was wearing the American costume.)

I replied, they will before long, or something similar. "I think not," he replied; "women are *too fond of*

show to ever give up long skirts, for by so doing the greatest and most available arena for display would be lost."

I answered, you talk as if women were to remain forever what they are now. I believe they are progressing. Do you forget the time when men wore their wigs, their buckram sleeves, their breeches' legs stuffed with bran, their knee-buckles, shoe-buckles, lace frills, ruffled shirt bosoms, etc., etc.? Do you forget the indignation of the Roman senators the first time they were addressed by a man in trousers? How they clung to the toga. But the "survival of the fittest" has kept the trousers.

Perhaps men have gone a little to extremes in their pruning process, but their dress is comparatively convenient.

"Well," said the doctor, somewhat meditatively, "perhaps in the course of ten or twelve generations women will progress so far as to have some regard for health, and value comfort and convenience more than show—which they certainly have not and do not now—but not in my day."

It makes me wince, it cuts me terribly, to hear women so spoken of—the more so because I know that there is much truth in it. But I know, too, that that good old

doctor doesn't see it all. He may have watched the ebb and flow of fashion's tide, but he does not know that under all is a mighty current of feeling, an uneasy longing for something better, that will ere long rise and swell to a grand torrent, overflowing and carrying away the follies and vanities of woman, thus leaving her free, for glorious work in this world which has so much need of it. Oh, there is work that has waited so long! But woman's robes have so entangled her that she could not work.

But let us come back for a little to a consideration of the difference. In the beginning I asked, Why are women less powerful of intellect than men?—which they are if “common fame” has it right.

I do not propose here to dispute “common fame.” I am obliged to confess that “common fame” has a very plausible argument so long as women manifest the folly and weakness at present to be seen in their dress. The trouble is they have devoted all their attention to the show of dress with no regard to the weightier matters. And haven't they obtained show? I'd like to see a man of the strongest intellect concoct anything with more “show” to it than women at various times have to their clothes. It could not be done. Let women

once apply their powerful intellects to comfort and convenience in dress, and you'll see something as much better than your hot woollen pants and stiff shirt collars all through dog-days as can be imagined.

But while women dress as at present, I expect to see them ridiculed and satirized by such articles as appeared in the *Washington Capitol* of October 5, 1879.

“The best evidence of inferiority in the female mind to the male is found in the difference of dress. A man clothes himself with a view to comfort and convenience; a woman for show, in accordance with vitiated taste. His dress is not so convenient as might be, but he struggles manfully in that direction. She, on the contrary, consents to inconvenience, to torture and ill-health, that she may appear, not in good taste, but in the requirements of good society.

“She makes of herself a monstrosity, for if the outline of her drapery is to be taken as an indication of the natural growth beneath, the nude woman, with her monstrous protuberances, would make a man howl with anguish. She weighs down her idiotic little skull with the decaying hair of dead women, and puts her heel under the centre of her instep. Were it not that cus-

tom made it law that we accept fashion with the same stupidity that originated it, a fashionable woman would be an exceedingly vulgar object to contemplate,"

"A woman is built by her Creator to be a mother; any change from the original plan is for the worse. To have her slender in the waist, which nature never intended, is to fit her for the beastly round dance, but it renders it impossible for her to be the healthy mother of healthy children."

No thoughtful woman can read such a criticism as that on her sex without asking. Why is it that men and women dress so differently? As a writer before quoted said, we must dig down to the foundations of society for our answer, and we shall find a "rank odor of heathenism."

The answer can be more easily thought out than put into words. When I, for the first time, heard Dr. James C. Jackson say "the long skirt is an emblem of slavery," I thought he was talking nonsense. I had put it off from considerations of health and convenience, with no thought that dress had moral, intellectual, social, and spiritual import. But that saying grew upon me, till to-day I recognize in it a truth of vast importance.

The long skirt is at once a cause and effect of woman's slavery; for the long skirt is the chief difference in the dress of man and woman. In other respects they may be dressed alike, even the *law* allows that, but look down to the feet, and at once you conclude whether the person under inspection is male or female. Is there such a difference in the feet of men and women as to justify this, or is the distinction an arbitrary one?

A great deal has been said against so much difference in the dress of men and women as now exists. It has been argued, that so long as it exists men and women cannot meet on an equal footing in any respect. But let us see what arguments are offered in its favor.

First: It is asserted that there must be a difference in dress to distinguish the men from the women.

Second: It is a woman's duty to make herself attractive—to "look her best"—as some of the religious papers have lately put it.

A long time ago Dr. Holland said, "No woman should allow another woman to appear better dressed in her husband's eyes than herself," or words to that effect; but that is a spoonful of the namby-pamby he has always been offering to women, and we don't pay much attention to it.

I never hear assertion No. 1 made without asking myself, Whose business is it, if I behave myself peaceably and properly, interfering with no one's rights, whether I'm a man or woman?

But admitting, to save time, that there ought to be a difference, is it necessary to put it around the feet and legs? Compel a woman to wear a sun-bonnet or a pair of spectacles, to carry an ear-trumpet or wear a big hat, or a big bow on her head—do something that will leave her free to go about.

Good people, you who declare there must be a difference in the dress of men and women, did you ever hear of the artist (?) who was exhibiting a picture of "Daniel in the Lion's Den?" He explained thus: "My friends, Daniel may be easily distinguished from the lions by having a blue cotton umbrella under his arm."

You take God for just such a dauber as that. I ask you if the beard on a man's face does not sufficiently distinguish him from a woman? Would it not be infinitely more just, because infinitely more in accordance with nature, to prohibit every man from shaving instead of compelling women to wear skirts? You may reply that all men have not a beard, but it is equally true that all women do not wear skirts. I have read of many women

who have worn clothes that caused all who saw them to suppose them to be men.

But if you still insist that skirts must be worn to distinguish the sexes, I insist that the men ought to wear them, if the claim is true that they are the stronger. They are too much for the women.

Ordinarily about my work I wear nothing below the knee but bifurcated garments. Sometimes, however, I go about the house for an hour or so in such skirts as women ordinarily wear. Not as bad as that either, for all the dresses that are sold for working dresses have a long train, while I have skirts two or three inches from the floor. And how they do fret, and worry, and tire me. It is far within bounds to say that a woman's work, dressed as she ordinarily dresses, exhausts her as much as twice that amount would do were she properly dressed. So I say again, if skirts must be worn and men are naturally stronger than women, let the men wear them; for we are not able. Dr. Foot, in his "Medical Common Sense," says that a Belgian writer has shown from history that women were the first to wear trousers. That is quite probable. So, usurper, please step out and leave us our rightful clothing; then, if your wife should insist on having a wood-colored carpet when you want a red

one, you won't have to complain of being under "petticoat government."

Dr. Jackson says, in "American Womanhood:"

"Put every man on earth into petticoats, and keep them on him, and God's sunshine would go back on the world's dial, till the blackness of darkness would completely cover its face."

We must suppose, however, that he overlooked the fact, that if men should put them on women would put them off—because "men and women must dress differently, you see, else we would not know who were men and who were women."

CHAPTER VIII.

WILL you now consider the second reason advanced for women's dressing as they do.

Her duty to be attractive—to look her best!

Will you tell me why? Think it over, and over, and over again. What does it mean? I could explain it to you if this language were addressed to the women in the palace of the Turkish sultan, but such things in papers professedly Christian are to me incomprehensible. We know what the Turk believes women were created for, and we know also that Jesus Christ put no difference between the man and woman. He never said to the man this is your work, and to the woman this, another kind, is yours. Either the whole gospel, with its responsibilities and duties, its penalties, privileges, and rewards belong to woman, or she has no part nor lot in the matter. There is no special gospel for her. And my friends, fathers and mothers, who have brought up your daughter to be attractive and look her best, what shall she say when the Master says, "I was an

hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not."

Shall she say, "I thought 'twas my duty to be attractive?" Shall she say, "It took all my time and thought to keep myself and children looking as well as other folks?" Will she dare in that day put in that plea for neglecting to use her abilities for the benefit of humanity?

Ah, fathers and mothers, beware. Remember that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Where do these teachers who instruct woman that it is her "duty to look her best" get their authority, and what do they mean by making herself attractive? Attractive to whom and for what? I do not ignore the importance of looking well. It is an important consideration—a *very* important consideration—a consideration of the *very highest* importance to the woman whose business is to play on the sensual element in man's nature, and whose good looks are her sole stock in trade. Has it that importance to Christian women? No; I will believe that they go on unthinkingly following the fashion. But could they see what they are doing, what

their example is doing for young girls, would they spend the time, strength, skill, and money that they now do on their clothes?

Did you ever stop to think what it means when you read of a certain fashion or article of dress that it is "*bewitchingly* pretty?" Has it a meaning, or is it a merely senseless expression?

I fear we read and say a great many things that would make us blush, if we should stop to sift out their real meaning. Perhaps it is well we do not. I have heard of a lady who declared that the heathen would be "saved through ignorance," and so it may be that, our ignorance or thoughtlessness saves us a great deal of one kind of perplexity. It is easier to jog along in an old rut, even if it have many a pitfall and many a stumbling-stone, than it is to strike out a new path.

Did you ever read of the two women in the book of Revelations? One is "arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls." To the other "it was granted that she be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." Not a hint of an ornament. If you read of the character of these two women you will see that their dress is very significant. Which is it better to copy?

A man who has lectured for nearly forty years, much of the time on the relation of dress to sickness and health, said to me, "You might as well take six dogs and suspend them by their tails over the falls of Niagara and expect their yelping to be heard, as to try to talk women into wearing short dresses or loose dresses, unless you can get the fashion books to pronounce them pretty and the style."

Not if I can convince them that their dress is not neat, but is inconvenient, immodest, burdensome, dangerous to life and limb, inappropriate for any active exercise or occupation, ridiculous, extravagant, unhealthful, degrading, and wicked.

He surveyed me with a look of contempt and said, "I don't want to talk any more if your knowledge of women is so limited as to allow you to suppose that those reasons would weigh aught with them. Put a fashion plate in the scales and it would weigh them down as if they were feathers. If you could be Worth's prime minister and prevail on him to pronounce in favor of a sensible dress and get all the fashion books to picture it, you might do something; but that's the only way."

Said I, not for the world would I have that come to pass. You entirely misunderstand my purpose. It is not

simply the inauguration of this or that style of dress. It is the development of so much courage and good sense such love of health, freedom, and *noble* power as will lead each one to choose for herself the style of dress best adapted to bring her what she loves. If a sensible dress comes in at fashion's call, where is its right to stay if fashion says go out? So I would not if I could to-day make a short dress fashionable. Though well aware that much good would come of it, I am convinced that the reaction would do more harm.

He seemed surprised, and asked my plan, which I stated simply to be the organization in every city and town, of a society for the discussion of the dress question and said I had no fears for the result if this subject could be allowed to occupy the attention its importance justifies.

He looked a trifle—but only a trifle—less contemptuous as I bowed myself out.

Did that man tell the truth about women? If he did, God have mercy on us and our children.

If some man should tell you that all the men in this country are drunkards and care more to gratify their taste for liquor than for health, honor, and goodness, and you should see in nine out of ten of the men you meet

good reason to show that he spoke the truth, how would it affect you?

Does it make any difference whether the intoxication is caused by rum or fashion, if the same destruction of moral, intellectual, and physical power goes on?

And our women *are* drunken — not with wine, but with fashion. I believe, with all my heart, that there is more moral delinquency, more intellectual inertia and vacuity, and far more physical disability traceable to dress than to rum and tobacco, beer and cigars. Yet the religious teachers go on telling women to “look their best.” What is your idea of what women were made for? Do stop and think what you are doing. “Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire?” If not, where is the necessity for their being constantly reminded of them? Don't you see that they can forget and constantly are forgetting things the forgetting of which jeopardizes everything of real value?

I would have it so that dress and fashion should be our servants, not masters—and most tyrannical ones as at present. There is no *slavery* equal to that of fashion. I have talked with many men and women on the harm done by woman's dress, and almost invariably they express a desire for a change.

But many men say, "I don't want my wife to be a gazing-stock."

And the women say, "I'd be glad to wear a short dress if other women would."

What abject servitude is acknowledged when women say, as so many of them do, "They say hoops are coming in fashion again, but I shall never put them on till I'm *obliged* to;" or "I wish hoops would be worn again, for I always liked them." "How glad I am that walking dresses are in fashion."

I suppose men are just as obedient to her mandates, but for some reason she sets them much easier tasks. Perhaps she thinks a rebellion might result from a different course.

I have in my mind just now a woman with an enormous trail on her dress, and the dress itself almost covered with bugle trimming, saying, "I'm pretty well for me, but I *always* have the backache." And that woman is an intelligent Christian woman. Could anything but fashion compel her to such folly?—so blind her eyes? Truly, "darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people."

I saw a woman just off a sick-bed, and I said, "Mrs. Slowgo, you are surely not able to be out."

“I know it,” she answered, “but Lily was absolutely destitute. Nothing fit to wear. I’ve bought her this sash, and that will make her look respectable till I can fix her clothes.”

Yes, and you see sashes and feathers and other frippery in families where the parents are mourning because they can’t give their children the educational advantages they desire to. Never mind! It’s the fashion. Other folks do that way, and “who wants to look so odd?”

Well, starve the brain till you haven’t any left, if you want to, but reflect on the consequences to posterity. If you weaken your brain by devotion to trifles, how shall your children inherit a powerful one? If you pinch up your stomach, liver, and lungs till you are dyspeptic, bilious, and consumptive, don’t be surprised when your children show symptoms of being all these. And here there is no difference. Here male and female suffer alike, so that you cannot say even in the case of a sick man that dress is not responsible for it. Not his, but his mother’s. A son may as surely inherit a weak brain, liver, back, and stomach as a daughter. It may not be as perceivable in one case as the other, because, in the daughter, this indirect effect of dress is

augmented by the direct effect thus making it more apparent. What shall I say more?

Time would fail me to enumerate all the woes and miseries dress brings upon us. I have not condescended to argue (though I believe it) that a woman would be just as "attractive," and look far prettier in a suitable dress. I leave that work for those who are fond of "cossetting."

But I have seen a woman, thirty-four years old, who was brought up without corsets, and has never worn long dresses a month in her life, and that woman's cheeks and eyes and walk and laugh and spirits would make a limp, die-away fashionable girl "green with envy."

Think of that, poor tired women!

Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell says: "We need muscles that are strong and prompt to do our will, that can run and walk in-doors and out of doors, and convey us from place to place, as duty or pleasure calls us, not only without fatigue, but with the feeling of cheerful energy; we need strong arms that can cradle a healthy child and toss it crowing in the air, and backs that will not break under the burden of household cares—a frame that is not exhausted and weakened by the round of daily

duties. We need muscles so well developed that shall make the human body really a divine image, a perfect form, rendering all dress graceful, and not requiring to be patched and filled up and weighed down with clumsy contrivances for hiding its deformities; bodies that can move in dignity, in grace, in airy lightness or conscious strength; bodies erect and firm, energetic and active; bodies that are truly sovereign in their presence, expressions of a sovereign nature. Such are the bodies we need; and exercise, the means by which the muscular system may be developed, assumes then its true importance."

Of course it is unnecessary for me to argue that as women dress at present they *cannot* take proper exercise. I have alluded to that already, and if I had not, any average person who could be sufficiently enlightened to set him to watching a woman for that purpose would soon find it out.

But a little more about looks. I take it that a sensible man in building a house will not at first choose his style of ornamentation and then make everything about the house correspond to it. He will decide on the needs of his family (or, what is much better, have his wife) and construct the house with an eye to them. Health, con-

venience, and comfort will come first in the requirements, and then he can make it look as well as he is able to consistently with these. Isn't that a better course to pursue about dress than the one at present followed? I know women who declare they cannot afford a comfortable shoe who afford a great many other things "for looks." And how many times I've noticed that "looks" are the last things to suffer when a curtailment in expenses is decided on. Books and papers are usually the first to be cut off. Next the delightful, health-giving ride must be sacrificed. And so it goes, through mind-growth and health, comfort, and convenience. Appearances must be kept up at all hazards.

I am like the newly-converted man who made his first family prayer. He prayed (in imitation of the ministers of long ago) for the president, the heathen, the Jews, etc., etc. After he had prayed for about an hour and still found plenty of subjects for prayer, he turned around and said, "Wife, if you can wind this thing up and bring it to a close, I wish you would, for I'm bothered if I know how."

That's the kind of fix I'm in. I want to stop and yet I don't want to without asking some more questions. I want to know if it makes any difference in the result

whether a woman is hindered from out-door exercise and going about to see things in the world for herself by her dress as women in this country are, or by law and custom as in some parts of the eastern continent. I confess that if I must carry my shackles with me when I go outside, the prison is not so great a punishment as it might be.

I want to know why it is that when your daughter is to be married or go on a journey or a visit, or to school, even, the house must be turned topsy-turvy for six weeks, and a dress-maker and all the female members of the family taken up with the preparation of her wardrobe, while your son, going for exactly the same purposes, requires no such elaborate preparation. Can anybody tell why this is so? Is it considered the best method for developing a noble womanhood? I wish somebody would think deeply and explain candidly, for it is certainly a very mysterious matter. Whatever explains that will also throw light on another dark subject. It will tell us why your daughter must be burdened with a trunk if she leaves home for a very short time, while your son can go respectably for the same time with only a hand-satchel. I should be most happy to have these matters elucidated, for at present

it does *seem* to me that injustice is connected with them.

“Why,” says Smarty, “I should think you could see that you can’t get a lot of petticoats into the same space required by a pair of pants. That explains your last perplexity, doesn’t it?”

Oh yes, Smarty, I can see that; but will you kindly explain the petticoats? What are they for?

“I give it up; but here is Mr. Con. S. Ervative. I think he can tell you.”

And that gentleman says, “Certainly I can, certainly. My mother wore them, my grandmother wore them, and my great grandmother wore them. Women, as far back as I know anything about it, wore them, and it seems sacrilegious to me for women not to wear them. It looks as if they thought our mothers and grandmothers, etc., did not know what was best to wear. I rather think they did; and it’s my opinion that women will stick to the good old way to the end of the chapter.”

Thank you for your opinion, sir, but all the same it’s my opinion they won’t. Did you ever hear about the man who carried the stone to mill in one end of his meal-bag? He had done it for years; but there came a time when he had so much corn in one end

of the bag that he could not arrange it on his horse's back. So he said, "My boy, you must get the other horse, and another bag and another stone, and help me take this grain to mill."

The boy asked, "Why don't you take that stone out of the bag and divide the corn? Then you will have room for all of it."

And the man said, "Tut, tut, boy. Do ye s'pose ye know mor'n yer grandfather did. He always carried a stone in one end of the bag, so of course that's the best way."

He took an extra horse, boy, and meal-bag all for the sake of carrying that stone, but it was not so foolish an act as we women are guilty of. We have taken time, golden opportunities, health and power for the sake of carrying about sillier things than that stone and things more useless.

Don't you think we'd better throw away these hinderances and burdens, and see if we cannot accomplish more? I do.

CHAPTER IX.

I READ over what I have written, and my words sound cold and dead compared to what I feel. Words of life and fire ought to be employed to wake you up to this subject. For what do I see? Look with me at that desolate grief-stricken home. They carried a sweet young girl away from there and laid her in the dark grave a little while ago. She was just entering womanhood, and just at the age when she most needed every obstacle to a perfect development removed she was put into corsets and long skirts. Do you say these made no difference? That she would have sickened and died just the same if her dress had been what it should be? You talk folly. Because a building from which you have dug half the foundation does not immediately fall to the ground, but waits till a gale of wind, will you say the gale of wind destroyed that building? No! and that fit of sickness did not kill that girl. Her constitution was undermined, and the first blow from severe sickness finished the work her parents had wellnigh completed.

I know many and many a young girl who is dying of her clothes—"Literally dressed to kill," as Elizabeth Stewart Phelps says.

Perhaps they won't kill themselves. The human constitution is wonderfully strong, and they may live to bear miserable sickly children. And when those children die, and the preacher talks of a "mysterious dispensation of Providence," who will dare tell the truth and say, an evident dispensation of ignorant wickedness?

Can you read that more than half the children born die under five years old and not feel an intense burning desire to know and help remove the cause or causes of this wholesale slaughter?

I tell you, sir, if you are capable of making money enough to dress yourself and wife in the latest style, you are capable of knowing enough to beget better specimens of humanity or else drop the business.

And you, madam, if you have brains enough to pick up your different articles of apparel and put them on in the right place, you have brains enough to learn so much anatomy, physiology, common sense, and morality as to make you ashamed of this state of things.

Do you suppose if all the time, strength, and money that were spent for useless dress in Memphis for the

last five years had been devoted to sanitary science she would have been so plague stricken?

What idea is this that a woman should assume the care of a house and family when she knows nothing of the conditions necessary for health? Every housekeeper and cook ought to be a practical chemist. Do you wonder that woman's work is so poorly paid, when you see how little preparation she makes for it? I was talking of these things a few days ago, and a gentleman remarked that life is not long enough for women to learn everything.

I answered that nine women out of ten spent enough unnecessary time on their own and children's clothes to learn chemistry and sanitary laws.

"Oh well," he said, "I suppose that's so. I meant there was not time enough for all this 'frippery' and the other things too, and they must have the 'frippery.'"

And he told the truth; but in such a way as to convince me that he realized its importance in only the very slightest degree. He sees only a glimmering of light. His drowsy lids are scarcely lifted, and so it is with the masses. What shall rouse them from this deadly sleep of ignorance and indifference?

Did Jesus tell the truth when he said, "The body is

more than raiment?" How many act, not only as if the raiment were more than the body but more than all.

Alas! alas! what shall we do? Give up, and let them sleep on?

No, with God's help, *no!* The light is rising. It grows brighter, stronger, clearer. The eyes of the sleepers are opening. The light is awakening, inspiring, thrilling them. I see them rising up in their strength to battle the follies in dress which so hinder their freedom and growth.

Thank God! at last woman walks forth glad and free to work.

THE END.

606





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022056128

