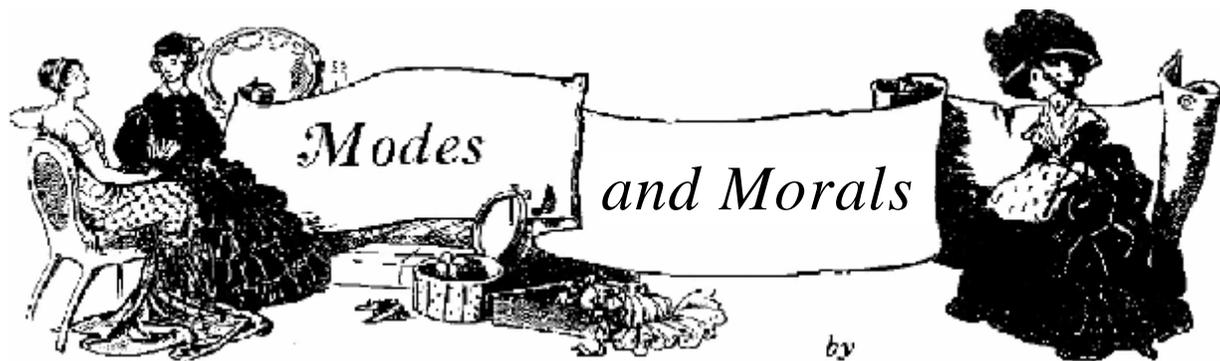


THE PLAY PICTORIAL



*The Hon. Lady Fortescue.*

PARIS in August and early September is a city given over to the occupation of the English-speaking nations. The real Parisians flee to the fashionable French seaside resorts, leaving their loved city inhabited by English and Americans. Everywhere one hears Anglo-French stammered irritably by British tongues; and pure American blared forth blatantly by citizens of the U.S.A. In August the great shops prepare for their autumn season, and are visited chiefly by travellers and buyers, conducted by indefatigable French *commissionaires*, eager to book orders for new materials, trimmings and models. Now, in September, the real clients are returning gradually, and an atmosphere of excitement pervades particularly the *salons* of the *maisons de la haute couture*.

The loveliest models are being shown of the new *tiolie, et gaze lame*, the softest, filmiest of materials woven in gold, silver and copper on a diaphanous ground with designs of fairy flowers and birds.

Then there is the soft crinkled tissue, fine and supple enough to be drawn through a ring—the loveliest shade being a clear electric blue. But perhaps most wonderful of all is the *Scarabe lame*. Imagine a sheet of gold or silver with a design of vivid blossoms shimmering through the melat-like flowers drenched with dew seen in sunshine or moonshine ! The reverse of this dream-stuff is generally black with the gay floral pattern in hard relief, so that very striking effects can be gained by artistic draping, and no further decoration is needed than one beautiful ornament to catch the folds to the figure. Many Paris houses are showing some delightfully picturesque *robes de style*. One named "Poupe'e en *Porceloine*" was made in shell-pink taffeta with a long, tight bodice and a curved apron made entirely of delicate pointed petals of taffeta sewn on to transparent net in semi-circles, a huge butterfly bow attaching it at the back. To my horror I actually saw a massive American woman select it for herself !

Another lovely period dress was also made in taffeta—black with an irregular hem. Huge flat rucked cocades of the same material, with diamond centres, were laid flat on each hip and the right shoulder. This, unhappily, was worn by a mannequin with a golden Eton crop, who had had her eyebrows plucked out and replaced by hard straight lines of Indian ink—a lovely face marred by artifice.

There was one extremely smart and extremely queer evening dress of the finest pale blue cloth cut into strips and plated round the body, hanging in loops from the waist over a petticoat of the same soft cloth.

Various cloaks were shown, nearly all of velvet in pale shades of rose, lichen green, and blue—all embroidered with fine sun-rays in gold and silver thread, all with a cape outline in metal rays, and with huge bell cuffs caught tightly to the wrists.

The day coats and cloaks are nearly all made of homespun or velour cloth with collars of flat fur; and nearly all are worn with the new little jabots and cravats of fur.

Eccentric sleeves are fashionable. Some of the evening frocks have curious flat circles of metal tissue, or some transparent material, stiffened, sewn round the armholes of the dress, above the bare arm, as if the wearer had pushed her arm through the disc of stuff and pulled it up to the armpit. Some are made like banners or pennants and attached to an elbow-strap; others float like wings from the shoulders.

A new, and, to my mind, ugly fashion is the queer collar worn with many of the evening dresses. It is worn separately, tight around the throat, and is made of a circle of stiff butterflies or flowers in graduated sizes placed laterally, jewelled with the same stones introduced in the decoration of the dress. I saw one of black velvet butterflies studded with turquoises, worn with a black velvet dress trimmed with turquoise straps. Hideous, in my opinion, and not even the loveliest woman could stand so heavy a form of ornamentation.

Many picturesque caps and turbans are worn with the afternoon and evening dresses, most of them Indian in design like those the Maharajah of Alwar wears. Some are of *crepe de Chine* heavily embroidered in gold; some are sequined; some with jewelled brims turned up from the face and with tulle crowns showing the hair, and each is made to match its own dress.

Novel bracelets of gold and silver filigree, looking like wide bands of metal lace insertion, decorated the arms of some of the mannequins; the inevitable chains of pearls adorned their necks, knotted in new and fantastic ways; and shoes with jewelled heels were worn with nearly every evening dress. These, though most effective in appearance when dancing, are quite disastrous to fine silk stockings, I am told by a vivacious damsel who adopted them.

The most charming of all the dresses I have seen had nothing very original about it, although it was shown as the *piece de resistance*, of that particular collection. I have seen many like it in an old fashion book at Windsor which belonged to the mother of Queen Victoria. It was a wedding dress of white tulle with a little tight bodice slipping off the shoulders, and a wide crinoline skirt composed of tier upon tier of white tulle flounces. A long tulle veil was held in place by a close wreath of white camellias, and a flat round bouquet of the same flowers arranged in circles was carried in mittened hands. Again the effect was spoiled by the incongruous appearance of its wearer. She had a shingled head and a heavily-painted face, which looked far too sophisticated for the demure simplicity of her early-Victorian gown.

Our English designers, though they have not the reputation of the French, understand these things better.