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OUTWARD ADORNING.

A very great outcry is being made just now by sober people against the excessive display and extravagance of the fashionable mode of dress, and the press and the pulpit are both invoked to lend their aid in putting down what seems to be a portentous and growing evil. There is, perhaps, some extravagance in all this denunciation. It would be well to settle the principles of dress in a moderate and liberal tone, for in this, as in all other questions, there is a good deal to be said on both sides.

Many Christians believe that plainness and simplicity of attire is the only and absolute rule for all Christian women, being one of the duties most clearly taught in the Bible. They quote St. Peter triumphantly, and argue that to dress gaily and sumptuously is *prima facie* evidence of worldliness and vanity. I am not at all sure that this is so. If we search the Scriptures for indications of God's will and pleasure in the matter of dress, we shall find much that seems to look with complacency on splendor of attire, and advocates attention to externals. When the church is described in its fairest, most alluring and most triumphant form, it is as a bride adorned with every circumstance of elegance. The model woman in the Book of Proverbs is commended for the richness and good taste of her attire. God himself represents himself as decking his church as a man would his beloved spouse with ornaments and jewels of price. In using these figures the Scripture condescends to the natural and innocent instincts of the human heart. Dress is an important element in the conditions of life. We cannot ignore it. No denunciation nor severity of criticism can destroy its influence founded deep in human nature, and no doubt intended to serve important purposes. They who decide it as of no consequence, and unworthy the attention of a 'rational immortal creature,' must have gone through life blind, or have studied the book of nature and of Providence with a perverted mind.

Dress is a subject of especial importance to woman. God meant her to be lovely and attractive; to have influence, that she may use it for good; to charm, that she may charm wisely. I believe it is the duty of every woman to make herself agreeable and to look as well as she can. The married woman who neglects her person sins against her marriage vows. The young woman who is indifferent to her appearance and the impression she makes on others, is deficient in the finest instincts of her sex, and does what she can to defeat one of the ends for which she was created. There can be no sin in studying the becoming and availing one's self of the aids of dress in heightening the charms of nature. I am much more inclined to call it a Christian duty to dress well. What ever increases a good woman's influence enlarges her means of doing good; and, all other things being equal, the woman who

dresses well, in good taste, and becomingly, has an immense advantage over the woman who does not.

So much being settled in favor of attention to dress, the next point is, what are its limitations? How far may a Christian woman conform to the mode, and yet retain her consistency and an unwounded conscience?

Common sense must define some of these limits. We are to consider what we can afford, what is suitable to our station in life, and to the date written down in the family Bible opposite our name. There ought to be a certain truthfulness in dress. More is probably said about extravagance than there is need for. Cheap goods are plentiful, and a forty-cent poplin made up with all the intricacies of polonaise and flounce, is quite as effective at a little distance as a much costlier article. As I write I see a "calico" going by my door made up as elaborately as if it were an Irish poplin. It looks very prettily. The young girl who has it on will wear it for a "second-best dress" for half the winter. Her best dress will not cost over thirty cents—her hat, which to be sure is prodigiously tall and has a red rose and a black feather, will not cost more than four dollars. She looks rather showy to be sure, but no one can say she is dressed extravagantly. She probably could not buy a low-crowned hat if she tried, and she would look rather queer with it if she had it. Yet, when censors begin their denunciation, they generally have in mind some such figure of a young woman in moderate circumstances dressed, as they suppose, in imitation of a millionaire's daughter.

The mode of dress just now is showy. It is hardly possible to make even "a calico" up plainly. Good taste and modesty must be called in. I think some of the looped over-skirts are picturesque, but we ought to remember that the fashions are designed in the hot-beds of Parisian vice and folly. Some of the figures in the fashion plates of Demorest, and Godey, and Leslie, and the rest, are simply monstrous. A modest eye, though it be artistically an uncultivated one, will detect at once the costumes which have been devised by a wanton imagination and which offend the fine sense of purity. Some of them seem designed to exhibit woman merely as an animal, dressed for exhibition with no other than the lowest animal motives.

We cannot ignore the 'fashion,' but we can insist that it shall be modest. It must be modest if we mean it to be attractive.

Every Christian woman and indeed I may say, every sensible woman who knows how weak human nature is, will keep very strict guard over the natural and laudable desire to look well and be attractive. It lies very near the borders of vanity and supreme selfishness, fatally near for many of the sex. She who makes a conscience of dressing well must also make a conscience of not misapplying and wasting her time and money which she con-

secrated to God's service when she gave herself to Him. The question "can I afford it?" ought always to be supplemented with "ought I to afford it?" The article may be tasteful and suitable, and every way reasonable. So far, so good. But if it be also *superfluous*, it will hardly be an act of self denial to surrender it, in consideration of the claims of the church of God, and the calls of charity on every hand. To every woman's own conscience we must leave it, and we recommend that it should be made the subject of serious reflection. It is not a trifling matter by any means. How to dress well, how far to be guided by fashion, and how much to spend, are questions that will require some balancing of motive to answer.

Not one in fifty who would decide as did a friend of mine who, having been recently married, was about to make a visit with her husband to a distant city to be introduced to a numerous circle of new connections. Her wardrobe was prepared with some care, all but the bonnet. That was to be bought after her arrival. Meantime an agent for one of our church boards preached for us, and presented the claims and necessities of Foreign Missions in such moving terms that my friend deliberately handed to him the sun she had devoted to the purchase of a new bonnet, and wore for the next six months a very plain article indeed. There was really some heroism about such an act of self denial, under the circumstances. Did she do quite right? Some of the best friends she had blamed her gently. Chiefly I believe on the ground that her husband was not pleased, and that her old bonnet did not make a good impression among his relatives. They thought she ought to have managed differently—giving to the Mission Fund, but not just then—waiting a little and economizing in some other department. Every one must have her own way of managing as it is to her own conscience she must answer. A Christian woman ought to dress suitably, tastefully, becomingly, and—*conscientiously*. —N. Y. Observer.

THE WAY TO PEACEFUL OLD AGE.

A few days ago there came into our office a venerable gentleman of this city, eighty-six years of age. His vision was clear, his hearing acute, his hand steady, his faculties unimpaired, his form erect, and his step as vigorous and elastic as that of a man in middle life. He has not been in regular business for some years, but is still engaged in attending to various affairs, and is at present superintending the building of a fine brown-stone house by the side of his own residence. He traverses the streets of the city almost every day on foot, enjoys excellent health, and is as playful and genial in spirits as a young man. In a word, the vital force which he exhibits is a wonder to his friends and his vast circle of acquaintances. He may, perhaps, be remembered by many of our clergymen as a spare, white-haired, smooth-faced gentleman, pre-

ent at the sessions of the Synod of Pennsylvania for a number of successive years past, even up to the last annual convention at Norristown.

Whilst engaged in conversation in our office, one of the editorial fraternity propounded to him the question whether he had ever made up his mind to what to attribute his remarkable vigor at an age which few men ever reach. He answered, with a promptness and impressiveness of manner which showed that he had considered the subject, and that he was settled and clear in his conviction as to the causes which, under God, had mainly determined the matter.

"I will tell you," he said. "In the first place, I joined myself to the church when very young, taking an active part from the beginning. This threw me in close acquaintance and relationship with good, upright, and honorable men. It gave to me a circle of virtuous friends, and something to occupy my attention, which was always to my profit. It gave me proper principles of action, and put me into society where such principles were most approved and exemplified. I was thus sustained in and habituated to correct living, which, above all, has done the most toward giving me long life and a comfortable and enjoyable old age.

In the next place, I was fortunate in my connections with an honorable business house, managed by good people, on correct principles. There was industry and faithful application inculcated and exhibited, but no hasting to be rich, no daring adventure or recklessness which creates and brings so much trouble upon men, disturbing their lives and shortening their days. These principles and safe habits I grew into, and have always practiced, living moderately and never possessed with the wasting fever to be wealthy. I have been fortunate and unfortunate, but never departed from the requirements of honor or integrity in business affairs, which I have found to be safe and good. I have thus acquired a competency for my wants and comfort in my life, to which I owe much of what my friends look upon as astonishing in me.

I can now walk, and sleep, and hear, and see, and enjoy my existence as much as ever. I have always been active and regular in my habits, cheerful in my disposition, cultivating constancy in my friendships, and calm and considerate earnestness in my efforts to do good and promote peace and happiness among my fellow-men. I have tried to maintain a good conscience, and to fill such place in the world as Providence assigned me without discontent or fretting impatience to make for myself a different lot. And so I am what I am."

We were so impressed with the patriarchal words, and with the beauty of the picture in living reality before us, that we felt at once impelled, as if by a special call, to make this record of them, where they may meet the eye of some to whom they may become of more than golden worth. The

facts, influences, and virtues to which our venerable friend ascribes the extraordinary length, vigor and happiness of his life, are indeed, the best conservators of earthly well-being; and where their clear and full effects are allowed to bear continuously upon a man from youth on, there may we always look for the best and longest enjoyment of this world, and the best preparation for that which is to come.—*Philadelphia Exchange*.

A writer in the *Golden Age* enumerates some of the sacrifices offered up to the "logic of conventionality." "Some kept idle, because they are in the set where work is voted low, and 'careers' are not always open; sons put into professions unsuited to them, and where they can never thoroughly succeed, because those in which they would have been perfect are also those the special set to which they belong vote low; daughters kept unmarried because the men considered of their own degree do not come forward, and the men who do come forward—good, honest, substantial fellows—are men considered beneath them in degree; education founded on the accomplishments fashionable in the set, and leaving knowledge in the rear—all these are the sacrifices our present bogy demands, tithes paid him without a murmur, and as if quite the right thing to do. When we can say that we take life and things according to their intrinsic value, and not by the estimate of this bogy, we may then say that, so far as this goes, we are free men, and have slipped so much of our shackles."

NO SUCCESS WITHOUT WORK.—When Charles Dickens said that all he had accomplished had been achieved by diligent, patient, persevering application, he only stated what had been the experience of every successful man. Nothing is more important to young men than that they should early learn and fully comprehend this great truth. It is step by step, by toilsome effort added to toilsome effort, that all great achievements are made. As has been well remarked, there is no royal road to learning. Neither is there any royal road to anything else of great value in this life. Work, steady, long-continued and regular application, is the only price for which anything worth the having can be bought.—There is no great success of any kind without great labor.

Somebody.

"What is the use of being in the world unless you are somebody?" said a boy.

"Sure enough, and I mean to be," answered his friend. "I began this very day. I mean to be somebody."

Ashton looked George in the face.

"Began to-day!—how? What do you mean to be?"

"A Christian boy, and so grow up to be a Christian man," said George.

"I believe that is the greatest somebody for us to be."

George is right. There is no higher manhood than Christian manhood.—*Our Little People*.