



OUR LONDON LETTER.

LONDON, June 23.

Dear Bee,

Last week was a very gay one with Ascot and the Test Match as its chief attractions. As the days were hot and the sky blue we were all able to appear in our smartest frocks, and both at Ascot and Lords the scene was one of unusual animation, and there was a softness and elegance about the dresses combined with a variety of colouring that was very grateful to the eye. Last Sunday has acquired the name of Show Sunday, and about Hyde Park corner there was a continuous stream of all sorts and conditions of men and women to watch the church parade. Although it was a pretty scene with a background of crimson, white and purple rhododendrons shaded by the cool green arch of the trees. I do not think that many of the smart people were on view. They seem to be withdrawing more and more each year from the parade and giving way to a much more plebeian assembly. I sat for nearly a couple of hours scrutinising the dresses, and made a few notes for your benefit.

The most noticeable feature of the throng was the great predominance of satin faced frocked. One person in every ten, I should think, had one on. The commonest shade was dark blue with a design of spots and wavy sprigs, although some of them had more extravagant patterns resembling notes of exclamation or starfish. A red foulard with white spots looked rather too warm for a hot summer's day, and some with a zig-zag pattern in green, purple and red looked extremely well papery. A very stout dame in a crushed strawberry foulard with a daisy pattern looked peculiar, as did one in salmon with a starfish pattern, but they were both eclipsed for eccentricity by a tall woman in a white silk dress, across which ran broad thunder and lightning streaks of gold and indigo. White foulards with black spots and vice versa were not uncommon. Stout and slender, old and young, all wore foulards. It was therefore an agreeable change to let the eye turn from the many shades of blue to the delicate lettuce green silk frocks covered with soft white muslin which looked so cool and suited the slender figures of their wearers so well. In some cases the muslins had embroidered upon them a graceful flowered design; one which particularly took my fancy had marguerites worked upon it in white silk with gold centres and long green stalks. In the majority of instances these green frocks were covered with book muslin with insertions of embroidery and Valenciennes lace.

Some of the tall women on the lawn were very becomingly dressed. One presented a very stylish appearance in a grey crepe de chine gown with a broad insertion of painted roses on silk muslin across the bodice and round the skirt, which was edged with fine black waved lace. A black and white toque with pink roses on the hair with a big tulle bow completed this dainty costume. A very simple but effective dress was worn by a fair-haired dignified woman. It was a biscuit coloured battiste trimmed with rich cream lace and crowned by a white tulle toque with ostrich feathers. A striking looking animated girl was well set off by a black crepe de chine with a blue vest and narrow waist band of blue mirror velvet, the revers of white satin covered by ecru Irish lace. A large chou of cerise velvet at the waist gave the costume a bright touch which was repeated in the picture hat in shades of roses above a blue butterfly bow. A young graceful girl, quite an English Rose, looked very sweet in an appropriate pink silk muslin flowered with roses over pink silk. Her large waved Tuscan straw hat was trimmed with pink roses and clouds of chiffon, and a pink parasol edged with black lace gave a dash to this pink of softness.

tion. There were several audacious creations in orange, which however had rather a tendency to look tawdry, and scarcely ever suited the wearer. I noticed one exception though in the case of a dark slender woman whose orange silk was veiled by cream canvas with pipings and knots of orange and subdued by a large black Gainsborough hat. A great many young girls showed a preference for violet and heliotrope, and there were comparatively few of those plain white muslins which young people have hitherto adopted as the correct thing for a hot summer.

I followed up Show Sunday by a visit to some of the leading dress-makers and milliners with a Corset-stalk costumiere who has come over lately to take back "tres smart" things for Australian society. I dare say you will like to hear of some of the costumes that she has selected for one of the leaders of fashion in Melbourne. A very pretty frock for a garden party is of pale grey crepe de chine with a deep flounce, at the bottom of which is inserted waved cream lace. The bodice is loose and pouched in front, and has a yoke of cream lace insertion and cream embroidery on fine silk muslin. The sleeves are tight with epaulettes let in of lace embroidery. The toque is of grey mousseline de soie with an insertion round the brim of grey straw and embroidery; resting on the hair are roses of pale pink and white shading into yellow. Another dress is of navy blue foulard with a white design, the waistband of dark cerise velvet and a large embroidered cream collar. A rather coquettish Tuscan straw hat is of a sailor shape and has a small crown turned up in front with flowered silk muslin in shades of cherry colour, and a full knot and bow in front, two mercury wings rising a little to the left side. Two of the parasols will be a special feature of these toilettes, one of white silk with three rows of waved black velvet, the handle terminating in a gun metal knob sprinkled with diamonds, the other of cherry coloured silk, with a wide black lace insertion at the bottom and falling from this a large frill of black chiffon.

Parasols, by the way, are very fantastic and extravagant this summer, some being hand-painted and with lace insertions and bearing jewelled handles and sprays of flowers. The most striking at Ascot were the flower parasols the outside of which or lace, the underneath lined with flowers, roses by choice, which lent an added charm to young and pretty faces. A few were of alternate circles of insertion and painted mousseline and many were either sprinkled or bordered with flowers. The greater number were rose-coloured, making the lawn look like a parterre of brilliant flowers.

Lawns and flowers recall to my mind the fact that I have not yet told you anything about our

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF WOMEN

is to the opening of the new Rose Garden at the Horticultural College, Swanley, which Dean Hole has laid out. Horticulture is to be one of the subjects at the Congress. Lady Castle-town is to preside, and papers are to be read on "Gardening as an Employment for Women," "Training of Women as Gardeners," and "Gardening in Inebriate and Convalescent Homes."

The Congress bids fair to be a great success, as so many tickets have been sold that there need be no anxiety as to the financial result, although the week's expenses for the meeting places are expected to amount to £1,500. More than 300 delegates from all parts of the globe will be present, and 1500 members have announced their intention of taking part in the Congress, so that full houses are assured. As the International Council, takes no side in political matters, there are bound to be some exciting and amusing discussions on such questions as female suffrage, temperance legislation, divorce laws and women's status in local government. It will be a labour of love with me to attend the Congress to hear the views of the leaders of thought and action in women's domain throughout the world, and to tell you something of the personalities present and the topics discussed. On looking through the programme, however, I find it rather hard to select what sections to attend. There are so many equally interesting, and as five meetings will, during the greater part of the time, be held simultaneously in the halls of three buildings, the Westminster Town Hall, the Church House, and St. Martin's Town Hall, one would have to be very

obliquity: Colonial delegates play a fairly prominent part on the programme. Viscountess Hampden, Mrs Armitage, and Mrs Dixon are to represent New South Wales, Lady Clarke and Mrs Bear Crawford, Victoria; Mrs Cockburn, South Australia; and Mrs Reeves and Mrs Neill are to speak of women's doings in New Zealand. Mrs Neill is to read a paper on the "Professional Training and Status of Nurses," and Mrs Reeves one on "Pension Schemes for Old Age," as well as to open a discussion on "Poor Law and Other Forms of State Relief." Mrs Hirst Alexander is to discourse on "Ostrich Farming in New Zealand," while some one at present unnamed from New Zealand is to hold forth on "The Parliamentary Enfranchisement of Women," "The Unpaid Services of the Housewife," and "The Responsibilities and Duties of Women in Public Life in Personal Action." Mrs Armitage is set down for papers on "Women's Agricultural Associations" and on "Divorce Laws," Mrs Hugh Dixon will ventilate her views on the "Married Women's Property Laws," and Mrs Gawler hers on "Emigration."

So much for colonial representatives. Cursory glancing through the programme I notice that Baroness von Suttner, author of "Lay Down Your Arms," and the great advocate of universal peace, is to speak, that Mrs Fenwick Miller is entrusted with the important subject of the "Effect Upon Domestic Life of the Admission of Women to the Professions," and that Mrs Heinemann, the Italian novelist, whose romantic life and marriage to her publisher will be fresh in your minds, is to discourse on Italian women in literature. Mrs Ayrton, the only woman who ever read a paper before the Institute of Electrical Engineers, will preside over the scientific section, the Duchess of Bedford, one of the Home Office lady visitors in female prisons, over the prison and reformatory section, and Mrs Creighton, the wife of the Bishop of London, over the rescue work section, in which Mrs Bramwell Booth of the Salvation Army, will give a description of the method of work inside homes. Miss Janet Achurch is one of the speakers in the much debated question of the drama as a field for women. The presiding genius of this section is Mrs Kendal, who has lately in "Woman" reiterated her opinion that "it is essential to the life of an actress to keep pure," and whose "Elder Miss Blossom" will soon be world-renowned.

A paper on "Stockbreeding" by Mrs Virginia C. Meredith, of the United States, shows that there are few occupations nowadays in which women are not engaged, while another American, the veteran, Miss S. B. Anthony, heads the list of speakers on the "Parliamentary Enfranchisement of Women." Mrs Benson presides over the section that is to deal with the serious question of the social necessity for an equal moral standard for men and women, and Mrs Sidney Webb, besides taking the chair in the discussion of "Provident Schemes," will read a paper on the "Attitude of Different Schools of Thought Towards the Question of Special Labour Legislation for Women." But I fear you will think this list will stretch out to the crack of doom. Tom says that so many women let loose at once will be worse than the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, but I am sure that the Congress will not result as the Chinaman once said in "Much talk-talk, little doo-doo." That remark is certainly very appropriate, for many of the women writers in our papers (who, it is whispered, are some times men) who give the readers advice on all sorts of subjects on which they themselves are profoundly ignorant from how to bring up a child or get rid of pimples on the face, to what attitude to adopt towards a lover under every conceivable circumstance. I wonder if you have seen the parody in the "Boston Congregationalist" on Kipling's Yankipie. It is too good to miss, so here it is in case it has not yet reached you:—

A woman was there and she wrote for the press
(O you or I might do).
She told me to read cut a dress,
And how to stew many a savory mess,
But she never had done it herself, I guess
(What none of her readers knew).
Oh, the hour we spent and the flour we spent
And the sugar we wasted like sand,
At the best of a woman who never had cooked
(And now we know that she never could cook).
And I don't understand.
A woman there was and she had her fun
(Better than you and I).
She told us our recipes and she never tried one;
She wrote about children—of course,
she had none—

AUCKLAND.

Dear Bee, August 11

Literary evenings have lately come to be a fad with us in the form of "Shakespearean Quotation" and "Novel Title" at homes. They promise to rival the ever-popular progressive euchre parties. The "Shakespearean Quotations" are generally limited to the great author's best known plays, such as "Hamlet" and others, the guests selecting therefrom apt quotations. For instance, "I could a tale unfold," and "To be or not to be," the latter carried out with a bee and a note of interrogation. It causes much fun and amusement trying to interpret your neighbour's suggestion or humorous design, and we simply feast over Shakespeare before the evening takes place.

"NOVEL TITLE" EVENINGS

are also very amusing, when a badge is worn by the guests representing the name of some book, and a prize is awarded to the one who has the highest number of correct guesses, and another prize for the most original design.

On Wednesday last Mrs Jackson, of Orakei Road, gave a very enjoyable "Novel Title" evening. Miss Buddle carried off the prize for the greatest number of guesses, and Miss Jennie Jackson for the most original design. Mrs Jackson wore black brocade; Mrs Proude, black bengaline silk; Mrs A. Hanna, pale grey, trimmed with tucked white silk; Miss R. Jackson, white muslin, trimmed with yellow ribbon and insertion made over yellow; Miss Jackson; Miss C. Jackson, pretty flowered muslin, made over rose pink; Mrs Black, dark skirt and pink evening blouse; Miss Hanna, yellow frock, with violet velvet bebe ribbon; Miss Bertie Buddle, very pretty dove grey velvet, trimmed with chiffon and steel buckles; Miss Lennox, electric blue dress, bodice of cream silk, covered with ecru lace; Mrs Trevor Gould, black moire, velours skirt, very becoming blue silk blouse, trimmed with lace; Miss Buckland, very stylish black dress, relieved with white chiffon, with design of black satin ribbon; Miss Brett wore pink silk, with green chiffon sleeves and bertha, pink roses on corsage; Miss M. Buckland, dark skirt, cream blouse; Miss Pierce, black velvet skirt, pink evening blouse, with white lace; Miss E. Pierce, very pretty eau-de-nil evening blouse, with yoke of ecru lace; Miss M. Churton, black satin skirt, blue accordeon pleated chiffon blouse, with steel trimming; Miss C. Smith, black and white chiffon blouse; Miss Hayward, black; Miss J. Jackson, cream blouse.

PROGRESSIVE EUCHRE PARTY.

Mrs T. Peacock, of "Fairview," Ponsonby, gave a pleasant Progressive Euchre Party on Tuesday evening, as a farewell to her son prior to his marriage. Miss May Whitelaw was the winner of the first lady's prize, and Mr Kelsher the gentleman's first prize. Miss K. Lennox and Mr Dacre won the second prizes.

Mrs Peacock, heliotrope silk, trimmed with black lace; Mrs T. Whitelaw, black silk skirt, pink blouse; Miss Peacock, white evening dress, with transparent yoke and sleeves of point lace and touches of red; Miss M. Peacock, yellow evening dress; Miss Loekie (Wellington), cream crepon dress, with yellow trimmings; Miss Toie, pretty blue blouse, dark skirt; Miss Dacre, white satin, trimmed with chiffon; Miss Brett, pink silk, with bertha and transparent sleeves of green chiffon, long chiffon sash, with roses on the ends; Miss Stevenson (Remuera), heliotrope and black lace; Mrs Parkes, pink cord and white, Maltese lace; apple green and white, Maltese lace; Miss Ross (Wellington), white surah, trimmed with chiffon, chiffon fichu; Miss W. Leys, pretty pink evening frock; Miss Kelsher, pink and grey plaid blouse, dark skirt; Miss Nelson, white chine silk bodice, trimmed with thick string coloured lace; Miss Hardie, cream and yellow silk; Miss Lennox, bright blue silk, with white chiffon bodice; Miss K. Lennox, yellow corded silk, trimmed with chiffon; Miss F. Hudson, white muslin, over pale blue silk; Miss Whitelaw (Scotland), pink shot glass silk evening blouse, black skirt; Miss May Whitelaw, cream satin, with transparent sleeves of gauze, cream flowers in her hair; Miss Parsons, crushed strawberry crepe; Messrs Dacre (2), Hay (2), Roberts, Kelsher, Dr. Parkes, Parsons, Whitelaw, C. Leys, Clark, Drs. Maitland and Fabat, Lennox, Hardie, Stevenson, Russell, Garrick, Brigham,