



MISS GIULLA MOROSINI.

She wears Princess gowns adorned with diamond buttons, and extends her love of rich garniture to her horses.

## "THE LADIES' GAME."

By GERTRUDE LNCH.

"Next to the gentleman's game of hunting we must put the ladies' game of dressing. It is not the cheapest of games."—Ruskin.

CORALIE and I have been friends for years. Indeed, our intimacy began long ago in a certain New England village, when, as small girls, we occupied adjoining desks at school. That little Jennie B.—no, after all, I won't disclose Coralie's identity—should have developed into the most famous, the most successful, and, perhaps crowning distinction, the most expensive dressmaker in New York, is a fact that never fails to impress me. Not that Coralie had ever been the ugly duckling of the fairy story—far from it; but her painstaking mind and her studious industry had seemed to promise for her a future no more brilliant than the Normal School and a teacher's career. What passed for Providence intervened, however, and now our paths lie far apart. For the profession by which I exist has forced me to deal critically with those very frailties of modern life, to which it is Coralie's business to cater. Yet, sometimes, I am inclined to think that, in her shrewd way, my friend is really the better observer, the keener critic.

It was shortly after her latest visit to the shops of London, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna that I accepted Coralie's invitation to dine with her at Sherry's on a Sunday evening.

We glided along Fifth-avenue in a smart little electric brougham—Coralie's latest acquisition, fresh proof of her success—past dimly-lighted houses, palaces in size and suggestion. Sharper nebule of light fell beneath the raised shades of great windows in the pretentious hotels that seemed to punctuate the street like exclamation points. Within were glimpses of gay colours, white shirt fronts, confusion and feasting. Everywhere there was a crowd; for it was the dinner hour on New York's favourite night for dining abroad.

We waited our turn in the moving line of motors and carriages that stretched along the avenue and into Forty-fourth-street, like the curve of some splendid serpent with eyes of fire. We left our brougham at the entrance of the entrance of the restaurant. The soft path of carpet brought us up the steps and within the doors, and we stood for a moment, our wraps taken from us as if by magic, to survey the kaleidoscopic groups of men and women in the great entrance hall. We threaded our way under the guidance of a head waiter to whom Coralie's is a well-known presence, past tables shining with glass and silver and crowned with rose and orchids, as if for some rite. Gay hats nodded like more splendid flowers under the drooping palms, jewels flashed in the radiance of a hundred shaded lights, and the deep

pulse of violins, played in a waltz, throbbled through the murmur of many voices.

The impression was of a very abandonment of luxury. "Extravagance, extravagance!" I exclaimed almost involuntarily, as we sat looking about. "Think, if you dare, how much money there is in this room in mere clothes! Where do you suppose it all comes from? It's overwhelming!"

"Extravagance!" Coralie picked up the word defensively. "Yes, but it's New York, remember. Here's where the wealth of the nation centres; here's where the greatest fortunes are; why not the most lavish expenditure? It's a matter of relations."

She paused to look at a group of persons about to seat themselves at the square table next to our own. There were six—three men and three women. The former classified themselves, in their well-groomed sleekness, their pride of possession, and their air



A £1,000 COSTUME.

Made for Miss Morosini. It is lavishly embellished by sequins put on by hand, and represents several months' labour.

of imperturbability, as types of the New Yorker of club and Wall-street manufacture. The women, all of them gowned with studied and luxurious elaboration, had given my companion smiles of recognition.

Dropping her jewelled lorgnette Coralie turned again to me. "I can't tell you where the money all comes from," she said, "but how much is spent on the clothes we see here—that is the subject. I know about clothes. Take these people next us, to begin with. They are all customers of mine, in a way. That woman with the grey hair, who is helping her husband to order dinner, has been coming to me for years."

I raised my eyes to a vision in Nile green crepe de chine. Panels of white chiffon, charmingly embroidered with jet and opalescent beads, followed the princess lines of the gown from throat to train. The elbow sleeves were finished with ruffles of rare Italian lace, and garnitures of pearls and opals were cunningly introduced. The gown suited its owner to perfection—a woman neither young nor old—in whom the grace of youth and the dignity of middle age had met.

"That costume came from my house," Coralie was saying. "I am rather pleased with it"—a note of professional satisfac-

tion, other great capitals, too. For there is no truth in the common notion that American women dress more extravagantly than those of any other nation. It may be that more American women dress well, but extravagance is an international characteristic, not merely national. And I believe that wealthy Russian women, at least, spend rather more on clothes than do Americans. Their furs alone, from St. Petersburg to Paris I noticed, a party of Russian women all wearing coats of sable, and not one of those coats, I am sure, could have cost less than £8000. In Berlin, the same winter, the manager of a great dressmaking house told me that he had been at infinite pains, really scouring Europe, to get an extra sable skin to match some others used in the trimming of a gown ordered by a South American. For that skin alone he had to charge his customer £600. That's not an exceptional illustration of extravagance among South American women, either. From Rio Janeiro and Buenos Ayres the women make their annual trips to Paris costumers. Oh, it's a mistake, believe me, to suppose that the wives of American millionaires are the sole support of the Rue de la Paix." Coralie paused, smiling at her own



MRS. ALFRED GWYNNE VANDERBILT.

And some friends at the Hollywood Horse Show. Mrs. Vanderbilt dresses simply, and her costume, including hat and parasol, probably did not cost over £30. The gowns worn by her companions cost several times that amount.

tion coloured her tone—"and it cost Mrs. C— exactly £140. I consider her a very well dressed woman, by the way, and not extravagant—as extravagance goes. She always gets the worth of her money; and if she has the money and chooses to spend it, what matters! I don't believe her bills for clothes come to more than £3600 or £4000 a year."

"Four thousand a year! £150 for a frock!"

"Don't be alarmed," Coralie's hand waved back the interruption; "that is nothing unusual! The perfectly plain, perfectly simple, Doucet gown that Mrs. C—'s sister—the young girl nearest us—is wearing, didn't cost a penny less than £140, over here; and I'm inclined to think that the other woman—she's worth £2,000,000 in her own right, I'm told—paid rather more for her gown of point Venise; it came from Maurice Meyer's. And there are a dozen gowns of the same sort in this room. There's a woman over there—Mrs. M—, whose wardrobe, it is said, contains over three hundred gowns! She declared in a newspaper interview that she spent £40,000 a year for her clothes!"

"That seems excessive, even to me," Coralie ran on, "but I know the possibilities. For instance, I was in the house of the three Callat sisters in Paris only last year, and I saw, with my own eyes, a New York woman order twenty-five gowns for the season. I know the prices charged there, and those gowns couldn't have cost less than £60 apiece. That represents the average for such women as are here to-night much more nearly than Mrs. M—'s £40,000; yes, and the average for gatherings such as this is

earnestness in defence of her countrywomen. "But I must give you more facts," she began again, "since £140 seemed to you so astounding a sum for one frock. What will you think when I tell you that a woman who wishes the name of being well dressed, as fashion knows the term, must have at least five or six of these imported costumes; also an equal number of domestic afternoon and evening dresses and of tailor-made gowns. There must be an appropriate hat for every out-of-door gown; and these cost anywhere from £10 to £20 or £40 apiece. In summer, a fashionable woman must have forty or fifty lingerie gowns, ranging from the cobweb of lace to the simple muslin, costing not more than £30. She must have morning gowns—she will pay £25 for a simple muslin, with perhaps two yards of inexpensive lace on it. Half a dozen evening coats for winter, and an equal number of lace or silk for summer, are a matter of course. When the Irish lace crochet coat first became popular, one shop sold 450 in a month, no one of them priced less than £40. And the accessories are in proportionate extravagance; for lingerie, handkerchiefs, scarves, and fans £100 or £1200 a year is a conservative estimate. We are living in an age of luxury, indeed; but what would you have? It is good for us dressmakers, at any rate, and one must live!"

II.

Regarding the price of clothes, it is of course to Paris—the habit of the dressmaker—that we must turn for comparisons. We find that in almost every instance prices are higher here in America