

NET BLOUSES.

After a lapse of a season or two net blouses have been revived once more. This time it is Paris who calls them back into favour once more and some of the recently arrived French blouses have been of sheer nets.

In keeping with the present vogue, these new blouses frequently show wide, frilly, fluffy, side ruffles, which may be of the same net as the blouse proper, or of coloured net or chiffon.

Usually they are rather simple in style, however, with a daring touch of colour, a band of black satin, a vivid tie or some little touch to distinguish them. And though many of them are made from sheer nets, chiefly Brussels, others are of fancy nets or beautiful laces.

Why Do We Laugh?

BERGSON EXPLAINS THE REASON.

Nowadays Bergsonism is a fashionable cult. The works of the famous French philosopher are being widely read, as much for the reason that they were written by Bergson as for what they contain. When Bergson lectured in London a month or two ago, no hall could be found large enough to hold all those anxious to hear him, and his books are being translated into practically every language of Europe and widely circulated in every country. To one who makes his first acquaintance with the Bergsonian philosophy through the recently-published essay on "Laughter," there seemed to be no particular reason for this sudden enthusiasm. Henri Bergson is certainly a lucid and attractive writer, enjoying at times wonderfully illustrative metaphors, and his ideas are original; but they are not strikingly so, and his philosophy does not always ring quite true.

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE RIDICULOUS.

'Was it not Rochefoucauld who said that in the misfortune of even our best friends there is always something at which we must laugh? At any rate, it was a Frenchman who endeavours to explain to us the reason for our seeming hard-heartedness. Bergson finds in everything we laugh at a common element—in a practical joke, in a ludicrous accident, in a queer-looking animal, in a picture, in a comic situation. That common element, he says, is humanity. The comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly human. For instance, we can never laugh at a landscape. Be it beautiful, charming, and sublime, or insignificant and ugly, it will never be laughable. If there is anything in a landscape to provoke a smile—such as the Nelson railway station, for instance—it is not at the building itself that we laugh, but at the person who designed it. We laugh at monkeys, because we see in them a grotesque resemblance to man. The element essential to laughter must be some departure from the worm of humanity. When a pompous old gentleman sits on his top hat we smile in exactly the same way as when we hear a clever pun. In one case it is the violent departure from the victim's usual mode of procedure which excites our risible faculties; in the other we are reminded—albeit deliberately—of the stupidity of the man who cannot use his own language properly. In both cases there is the essential conspicuous difference from the worm.

EMOTION THE ENEMY OF LAUGHTER.

A symptom which Bergson points out as especially worthy of notice is the "absence of feeling" which usually accompanies laughter.

It seems as though the comic could not produce its disturbing effect unless it felt, so to say, on the surface of a soul that is thoroughly calm and unruffled. Indifference is its natural environment, for laughter has no greater foe than emotion. I do not mean that we could laugh at a person who inspires us with pity, for instance, or even with affection, but in such a case we must, for the moment, put our affection out of court, and impose silence upon our pity.

Everyone of us who has played a game of football can remember laughing heartily at the spectacle of a friend nursing a painfully hacked shin. Of course, he asked what we found to laugh at, and we could not tell him. Bergson tells us that our sense of humour for the moment was stronger than our sympathy. "In such a case no great harm is done, but when we cannot restrain our laughter at a really pitiable case—there are people, for instance, who will make fun of a cripple—then laughter becomes cruel, and the person who laughs shows a want of self-control which is enphable.

THE VALUE OF LAUGHTER.

One critic of the Bergsonian theory has summed up his philosophy in the following words: "Laughter is a means of social chastisement; it is the corrective which society applies to something inimical to social life." A little ridicule is good for most people, and will often cure a bad habit more surely and more quickly than any amount of preaching. The ultra-dignified person who proceeds through the street with a handbill attached to the tail of his highly respectable morning coat learns a far better lesson from the laughter of the groundlings than he would from their censure.

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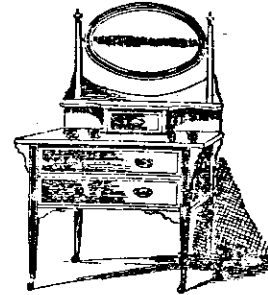
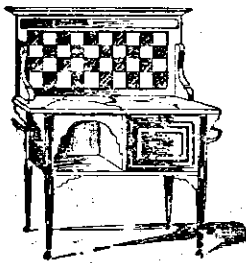
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