OUR FASHION LETTER

THE SHORT SKIRT WILL STAY THROUGH THIS SEASON.

A Growing Tendency Toward Military Effects--Chick Travelling Frocks--For Golf Skirts Get Khaki or Pongee--Another Travelling Gown.

Let it not be supposed that the summer season advances this far without strong evidences of changes in fashion showing themselves. It is enough to know that the spring opened with a mad furore for every kind of frill, furbelow, and gewgaw; to surmise that by mid-season my lady's mood would change and from sheer satiety she would begin to show a leaning toward the other extreme and begin to adopt the trim, neat and somewhat military styles. These tendencies are to be seen first in her costumes for outing, sport and traveling, and the midsummer additions to her outfit are a certain boastful swagger air, from which her earlier investments were markedly free. Her traveling gown, which for many seasons past appears to have forgotten its origin of dust-proof simplicity and has extravagantly flaunted ornamentations of so elaborate and perishable a character as to show a wanton disregard for tradition and the ravages of cinders and dirt, is now beginning to show a few symptoms of quietness and plainness and is learning anew, something of the wisdom and severity of its foremothers.

Even since the first of the season a decided change has crept in, and now the suits for traveling are comparatively simple save for the trim and all popular ornamentation of gilt braid and buttons, which express the military spirit that is rapidly becoming the rage. Dark blue Italian silk with a dash of gilt braiding and a few gilt buttons, is the most recent ideal summer traveling costume. This Italian silk is a slight variation from the mohairs and siciliens, which have taken such a stronghold this summer and while a great deal more soft in texture and more silky and lustrous in appearance, it still sheds the dust as cleverly. It is a more expensive material, however, and in its paler shades is allowed to appear at dressy affairs from which the mohairs and siciliens are ruthlessly ostracized. In dark blues, browns and stone grays, it is admirably adapted for summer traveling gowns, and is light and cool.

An extremely smart little suit of blue Italian silk recently from the other side, appeared in Tuxedo not long ago and was genuinely successful in its air of briskness and chic, proving also eminently appropriate for short railroad journeys and days of shopping in town. The skirt showed a plain straight panel down the front, which was bordered in heavy stitcheries of black, and outlined at its outer rim with two rows of the very narrowest gilt braid. The panel was cut in the same piece, with a yoke which came down upon the hips in the outline of paniers and curved up at the back leaving a space in which pleats of the main skirt appeared, extending from the waist band to the floor. The skirt was eminently pleated, the pleats which joined the panel in front being considerably larger than those at the back, an effect being obtained by the graduating sizes of the pleats. The bolero jacket was equally original and chic, showing the same curved outline as the yoke of the skirt with its trimming of black stitcheries and gilt braid. As the bolero curved sharply from the neck below the arms, a pleating of the Italian silk was adroitly attached to repeat the effect of the skirt. The pleating fell in front from the neck in two large folds and graduated to the very smallest and narrowest size as it joined the rounding jacket under the arms, showing only about one-quarter of an inch in dept below the line of the bolero in the back. The jacket was cut somewhat low in the neck and not allowed to meet in front, where a twist and a few loops of gilt

braid and two gilt buttons on each side served as a fastening. The blouse worn with the suit was of scarlet, of a very gayshade, which showed so scantily between the bolero fronts as to lose all suspicion of boldness. The collar of the blouse had a large white band of stitched pique at its top and the folds of the soft red silk looked very smart between the pleated fronts of the jacket. The cuffs of the bolero were another feature of the present styles, being somewhat large and turned back from the waist. They were curved to give a small imitation of the outline of the jacket and short yoke, trimmed with the stitcheries and gilt braid in the same fashion, and having a tiny border of the pleating.

Another Travelling Gown.

Another travelinp gown, also designed for the purpose of short railroad trips and a day of shopping and knocking about the city, was devised with an idea of coolness and comfort. It was a gown of grayish green mohair with braid trimmings a la militaire of narrow and wide white braid. The skirt was cut on the seven-gored pattern, with gores flaring to considerable width at the bottom, and with lines of the white braid above the hem, the narrowest braid covering each seam. [illegible] The skirt was unusually [illegible] and could be worn indifferently with an underskirt of silk or lingeries. The blouse worn with this skirt was of green washable silk with white cord cross-barrings, and made extremely full in front, but without tucks or trimmings of any kind. The jacket, which of course, was of the same material as the skirt, quite broke the ranks of summer jackets by taking another form than the bolero. It was extremely smart and new, having borrowed enough of the bolero's style to gain its admittance, and yet being built altogether on the principle of the Russian blouse; the bolero style showing itself merely in the braiding, which described its outline in front and also in the back, where the lines of braiding extended laterally above the broad black girdle, where the slight pouching above the belt was as disguised by the braiding, and made to simulate the lower edge of the bolero. The little peplum, which gave a jaunty capping to the hips, was circular and without fullness save in the centre of the back where the addition of two little pleats gave an air of jauntiness. The lining of the little blouse was of India silk in a somewhat brighter shade of green which added a certain freshness and coolness of aspect and scarcely any additional weight or heat. It is worthy of remark aso that in both of these new traveling gowns, there was a perceptible shortening of the skirt, which seemed to verify the prophecy the short skirt is the coming mode.

Golf and Other Skirts.

The golf and outing skirt has now reached a line that is moderate and convenient. It is no longer short enough to create surprise, and its ankle length proves both graceful and free, upon its present satisfactory proportions, the new street skirt for the fall is to be remodeled, but this does not mean that the long skirts will disappear. For dress occasions and also walking and street costumes the present long and flaring skirts promise to hold their own, but will not appear upon the street. Apropos of golf skirts, it seems as if pique and ducks have had their day and the wide popularity which they enjoyed last year is now waning. They are now thrust in the background by skirts of khaki and pongee, the latter particularly are

strongly in evidence this season and are constantly seen on the golf links, verandas, and the beach. Their extreme lightness and immunity from starch makes them adaptable both for seaside and mountain resorts. For golf their lack of crispness and consistency as well as their thinness, necessitates petticoats and underskirts of silk or lingerie which is considered a trifle unsportsmanlike but nevertheless it is the popular skirt for golf, and its perfect lightness and coolness make it irresistible for mid-summer wear.

Nearly all of the new gowns show decidedly larger sleeves, and by the time fall appears we may expect to return to our mutton legs. Large turned backed cuffs are already making their appearance. The dainty bicycle maid may appear like the above illustration.

How to Talk Interestingly.

"Entertaining conversation is not alone dependent upon a well-stored mind, a ready wit or broad culture," writes Mrs. Burton Kingsland, in the Ladies' Home Journal. "It lays under contribution qualities of heart as well as head, and should reveal sincerity, sympathy and simplicity. We must feel an interest in our subject before we can inspire it, and enthusiasm is contagious when it is sincere. It gives animation to the face, vivacity to the manner, and has a thought-compelling power that aids fluency of expression. Sympathy and adaptability are created in a measure by the desire to please, but one must be sensitive to the mood of one's audience and quick to perceive when some one else wishes to speak. There are talkers who metaphorically take the bit between their teeth and run away with a subject. When they finally cease no one has anything to say, despairing of opportunity. Without simplicity no conversation has charm. The moment we perceive that it is labored, or that the speaker seems to calculate the effect of his words, if unnecessary mention is made of desirable acquaintances or there is a display of attainments or mock-innocent vaunting of advantages—that moment do we feel only contempt for the affectation and pretense. Truth has a marvelous power of making itself felt, in spite of what is said.

Milk is not a beverage; it is a perfect food. Where children drink milk at meals it should take the place of notrogenous foods—meat, of course, being omitted. It is far better when the children eat meat to give them water to drink. Where such sorts of nitrogenous food are used, like meat and milk, constipation is universal.—Ladies' Home Journal.

THE BIRD'S LITANY

Woman unto thee we cry,
Useless shall our pleading be?
Must we for thy pleasure die
Hear our solemn litany,
Shall the splendor of our wings
Make thy brow a flame?
Shall the notes the woodbird sing
Tell of murder or of blame?

We who sing the flowers to sleep,
We who watch o'er field and wood,
Watch and ward above them keep
Through the wintry solitude,
Plead for leave to live, alas,
Life is thine, its gain or loss
Must be measured by thy hand,
Raptured song or crimson cross.

By the crosshill's twisted beak
As it wrenched the nails away,
By the songs beside the cross
When no other friend would stay,
By the robbin's blood-stained breast,
By the crimson drops that lie
On the woodbird's bleeding crest
Hear our solemn litany!

Woman who so sweet and fair?
What thine answer or excuse?
Wings were made to beat the air,
Never for another use;
Brown and bare the hills shall rise
If caprice shall play its part,
Women, every bird that flies
Wears a song within its heart!

Give us but our own, the breast
Of the sea gull worn by thee
Speaks the poor deserted nest;
Shall thy beauty fade or flee
If the starving ocean brood
Hear betimes an answering cry
Winging over shore and flood,
Ever, alone, they famished die?

Would thy fair face be less fair
If mined by no song bird's wing?
Ah the feathers women wear
But invite a voiceless spring!
Can a woman's tender heart
Be unheeding to our plea
Or refuse to take our part,
Deaf unto our litany!

Shall the forests leafless stand?
Life and death to thee belong.
Dar'st thou lift a crimson hand,
Dare to hush a single song?
Songless, with their shining wings
All unstirred, our children lie,
Unto thee each bird that sings
Lifts its solemn litany!
—Neely Hart Woodwarth in Boston Journal

What the Mandarin Knew

"Dear Sue," the letter ran, "you must have guessed long ago what it is that I am going to ask you. Our friedship is one of many years standing, and ever since I came back from college last summer that friendship has come to mean something more. Sometimes I have left sure that you guessed my secret, but I have hesitated to tell you, for I am so unworthy of you and have had so little to offer in return for the great thing I ask for.

I cannot wait any longer. I must know where I stand. Can you love me, Sue? Can you consent to be my wife I love you so dearly and if I get the appointment I spoke of to you yesterday we would have enough to start on at least. Your father says he is willing if you are. I can't ask poetically, as some fellows might but my love is sincere and true, and if you can bring yourself to say yes, you will make me very, very happy. I shall wait impatiently for an answer."

The letter was signed, "Devotedly yours, Tom." Sue was sitting in the sunny bay window of her bedroom as she read it, and smiles and tears struggled for supremacy on her sweet face. She was a motherless girl, the only child of a devoted father, and she loved this Tom very dearly. Indeed, she could scarcely remember when she had not loved him, and now at least what she had secretly longed for in her dear little maidenly heart had come to pass. Tom wanted her to be his wife.

As she sat down to write her answer her heart sang, but her pen could not be persuaded to put in glaring black and white the loving thoughts of the writer, and after several unsuccessful beginnings which were promptly consinged to the fire, she wrote

"Dear Tom—Come and have a cup of tea with me to-morrow at 4 o'clock. Yours, SUE."

She sent this off, feeling quite sure that Tom would understand that this meant "Yes."

The next day she was busy all the morning with some charity work in which she was interested, but when 4 o'clock came she was at home daintily gowned, trying to look the calmness which she did not feel as she waited for her lover. Every sound on the street drew her to the window—she peeped out between the curtains at least a dozen times—but it was a false alarm every time. Half an hour passed—three-quarters—still no Tom. Her heart sank like lead. Perhaps something had happened to him; some accident. Perhaps—and how the blushes covered her cheeks—perhaps it had all been some joke and he didn't really love her. Well, thank goodness she hadn't said much to incriminate herself in that letter. But, oh, how was she ever going to stand it? And here the pretty face took refuge in the pocket handkerchief, there to remain till the announcement of dinner forced her to much rubbing with cold water and eau de cologne in order to get her swollen lids into anything like their normal condition.

Her father noticed that something was amiss and blundered into it by saying: "What took Tom off in such a hurry? He took the afternoon train to Boston. Must have been something out of the ordinary.

She managed to murmur something almost indistinguishable about "guessing it was some business matter," and the moment dessert was over ran to her room to argue with her own fears. "Of course, he was called away suddenly—that was it. I shall hear from him to-morrow, explaining all about it," and she went to sleep that night much comforted.

Nevertheless, five days elapsed and no word came from the delinquent lover.

Finally poor little Sue made up her mind that he had seen her affection for him and had been simply trifling with her, so she made a mighty effort to put him out of her mind entirely.

She tried to go about her usual duties as bravely and cheerfully as heretofore, and a few days after this found her one afternoon the center of a merry little group of friends, sitting around the pleasant fire chatting cosily. One or two of them had tried putting some leading questions to her about Tom Fielding, but she answered unconcern that they decided that them with so fine an assumption of "there was nothing in that affair after all." Finally when they had confided to each other all the secrets they knew and gossip languished. Sue suggested to Marjorie Flanders that she start the kettle going, so that they might have a cup of tea. One of the other girls started to expedite operations by putting the tea in the teapot, but when she opened the tea caddy—a grinning little mandarin whose head served as the lid to the tea caddy, she discovered a little folded whisp of paper inside the quaint little figure. She pulled it out, and, without thinking began to unfold it when suddenly a line of writing in pencil caught her eye.

"My own dear Sue" that was all she saw. "Oh, girls—see here—see here—a love letter of Sue's in the tea caddy. I thought she had a secret."

"What do you mean?" said Sue, jumping up, pale as a ghost.

"Now don't you wish you knew?" began her friend but when she looked at Sue's white imploring face she realized that this was no time for teasing and handed her the letter without further parley.

Sue ran to the window and by the failing light she saw a rough page from a note book on which was scrawled in pencil the following words:

"My Own Dear Sue—Your little note has filled me with such a sweet hope that I'm filled with disappointment at not finding you in, but I got a telegram telling me to come to Boston this afternoon. That means the appointment and that in its turn means you and one cozy little home if your note meant what I hope it did. I hoped to find you at home this morning but your stupid housemaid doesn't know where you are. To make sure that you get this I am going to confide it to the safekeeping of the mandarin, for I know you will open him to get your tea. Write to me at once darling, care of Blank & Co., Boston, and tell me in plain English what my answer is. It may be two weeks before I could hear it from your lips. Yours ever,

"TOM."

"Oh you wretched little mandarin," cried Sue, "to think that you had known about this all these days and never so much as winked!" And then, of course the girls had to be told all about it, and this Sue did with many blushes. Then they all insisted that she sit right down and write her answer to the letter that very minute.

In the meantime there was an anxious and unhappy young man in Boston. He watched the mails and yestered the postman till that worthy crossed the street whenever he saw Tom's form approaching.

At last his anxiety reached such a point at the very moment that Sue was writing her answer a telegram was brought in saying:

"Have you opened the mandarin lately? Please answer. TOM."

How the girls all laughed! The telegram which answered Tom's anxious query has never been made public, but its general tenor may be guessed by the fact that it was accompanied by five other telegrams of congratulation, each a perfect masterpiece of veiled allusion.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Fielding have been living for some months in a pretty little apartment in the Back Bay region in Boston—and if you look in a little cabinet in which they keep their dearest treasures you will see, standing proudly on a carved teakwood stand, with a most inscrutable smile on his face, their household fetish, the mandarin.

Business Men Should Live in the Country.

"It would be well if the thousands of men accustomed to exist in the cities during the winter, and who are, at this season of the year, in the country, were to seriously look into the benefits of country life the whole year through—handy enough to the city bor business and schools, if need be, but yet far enough away to insure a more reposeful living and purer air during the evening and night hours," writes Edward Bok, in the Ladies' Home Journal. "The inconveniences are minor, and no minor inconveniences can outweight the rich advantages of the country and the health that comes from having sunshine on the four sides of one's house. Thousands of our business men whose hours and incomes make it possible for them to do so would be infinitely bettered by living in the pure air of the country the year round. The city, no matter with what comforts they may surround themselves, nor how they may wall themselves in against intrusion, cannot give them that rest and recuperative strength which they need. A man's mind cannot be at rest unless everything else about him is at peace. The very quiet of the country after nightfall is the best possible medicine for an active business man. Anything conducive to a slackening of the present pace of our business men is a move in the right direction."

Debtors in Siam, when three months in arrears, can be seized by the creditors and compelled to work out their indebtedness. Should a debtor run away, his father, his wife or his children may be held in slavery until the debt is cancelled.

SOME CHINESE GODS

SOME OF THOSE THEY SEEK TO PLEASE WITH BLOOD

A Cardinal Feature of Their Worship—One God of the Dead—Two Other Gods Are Popular Deities—Worshiped in Japan and Thibet Also.

The civilized world knows that there are eleven millions of so-called Boxers in China, who are insanely hostile toward foreigners and who have displayed this hostility by most barbarous acts, but few seem to know the exact reasons which have impelled the Celestials to such sanguinary deeds. As a guide in this direction a book which has just been published in Germany and which throws much light on the religious views of the Boxers will prove of service. The book is, in brief, a record of the many religious emblems, symbols, statues and paintings which were collected by Prince E. Uchtomsky, the distinguished Russian scientist, during his recent travels in the East. The Prince tells us much that is new about religious life in China and the illustrations which accompany the article show some of the image gods that are worshipped in that country. Of this worship a cardinal feature is a belief in the doctrine of rebirth or regeneration and another feature, almost if not quite as important is the belief that under all circumstances the utmost reverence is due to ones ancestors. Hence among the Chinese deities is a god of the dead who is supposed to safeguard the interests of persons after they leave this world and there is also a god of hell whose duty is to punish the wicked and to reward the good. This latter deity it is said was once a great criminal himself and on account of his sins he is still bound to swallow a certain quantity of molten metal every twenty four hours. In spite of his peccadilloes on earth he is highly honored by Chinamen since they know that as supreme lord of hell he can mete out to them either most dreadful punishments or most desirable rewards, the latter always taking the form of fortunate rebirths.

The Other Gods.

The two other gods are also most popular deities, especially the one known as Bhaishajaguern. Medicine god is his other name, and he is worshipped in Japan and Thibet, as well as in China, forming, as it were a trinity with Amitabha and Gautama. His age no one knows, for his worship was in vogue even before the first Chinese records were made. This figure may be seen in paintings on bronzes and in the form of great statues, and he is sometimes represented alone and sometimes with eight attendants. As his name shows, his duty is to heal the sick and that he possesses this power devout Celestials firmly believe. Not only therefore do the sick pray to him but they also never fail to touch that part of his body which corresponds to the afflicted part of their own bodies feeling confident that in this way the healing virtues of the deity will be transferred to themselves. At first sight it may seem singular that belief in such gods should have been the primary cause of the present trouble in China, yet such appears to be the fact. Among the Boxers are many sceptics, but there are also many faithful followers of Buddha and Confucius, and these latter have long been opposed to the Christians in China since they saw that their religion was directly opposed to their own so far as the doctrine of ancestor worship was concerned. For this reason they have never ceased to mock at the Christians.

Nicknamed Religion

They have nicknamed their religion "The Squeak of the Celestial Pig" and they have derided the most sacred ceremonies of the Christian Church. Far and wide they have spread a rumor that the Holy Communion is merely a philtre, which makes the people the slaves of the priests, and that the latter, while administering extreme unction, avail themselves of the opportunity to cut out the eyes of the dying. At onetime it was supposed that only a few ignorant fanatics acted in this manner, but now it is said on excellent authority that a similar feeling of hostility toward the Chrisians has been growing for some time among educated Chinamen, of whom there are many among the Boxers, and that the sole reason is because they regard the Christian religion as directly antagonistic to their own ancient faith, and especially to the doctrine of ancestors worship.

It is Idolatrous.

Whether this worship is idolatrous or simply reverential is not very clear, but a close study of Prince Uchtomsky's book seems to show that it is both, though possibly it may be more idolatrous in one country than in another. This very question was submitted to the Pope some time ago, and after much thought he decided that the manner in which ancestors were worshipped in China savored distinctly of idolatry. The result was that the Catholics in that country at once set their faces against it, and the Protestants quickly followed their example.

It may be tha the outbreak against foreigners in China would have come in any case, but there are many who claim that it would not have come quite so soon if the people had not been angered to fever heat over this religious question.

WITH THE SMART SET.

The Piazza Question an Imperative One Now

The "smart set" is a term that has become associated with the people of the leisure class all over the world, but the "smart set" who dine out of doors in summer are by no means confined to just a few representative people, and the word "smart" might easily in this case be changed to "sensible." For any one who has once dined out of doors in hot weather under any sort of favorable auspices, in the shade of a canopy or under a piazza roof, will certainly continue so doing as long as possible.

The piazza question is an imperative one at present, and piazzas are growing in popular favor and use every day. The stoop may be a relic of former days; he piazza is is idealized follower, and now more attention is paid to the piazza than to any other part of the house.

Newport was the first to start this custom of living on the piazza and furnishing it like a room, and the fashion has spread like wildfire all over the country until the most modest of suburban residences can boast of what the real estate man calls a "veranda," which is furnished and really becomes the principal living room of the summer home.

The rugs and furnishings of the veranda need not be expensive but they must be comfortable. There must be awnings or screens to pull up and down and if the country is infested with mosquitoes there must be wire netting. All the new country houses especially those designed for all the year round occupancy, have these enormous piazzas so arranged that they can be used either in winter or summer—in summer a place to be cool and in winter a place to be warm. The furnishings remain practically the same winter and summer but the screens and lattices are changed for glass. The same beautiful flowering plants and palms remain or at all events there are those that look just like the others in case the first plants do not thrive.

Done With the Millionaires.

Two maids or two men servants, or a waitress and second man are required to serve luncheon in any formal house. Dinner is a different matter, for it is fast getting to be as tremendous a function on this side of the water as it is in England where dining is the most serious of all functions, and where the man can say, "I'm dining with Lady So and So to-night, with Lord So and So to-morrow," and so on, ad infinitum and ad nauseam, makes you feel that he takes it for granted that you don't know what it is to dine.

The number of men servants, the number of courses at a dinner and the decorations on the table are in these days only limited by the size of one's house and of one's bank account, for it is considered smarter to have a shorter dinner in summer than in winter with fewer courses, but with each course a masterpiece in its way.

Livery is much more thought of than it was, for people take much more pains about what rightfully belongs to them now—the color of the livery their servants should wear, and so forth. Having an individual taste and using the livery that belongs to one's family makes it much more individual in appearance and although we have not yet began to choose our menservants according to their size and appearance, and although as a rule we do not go in for powdered hair and knee breeches we're fast getting to them. In the meantime, whether our meals are out of doors or indoors, the one that is served with great formality is dinner.

Evening dress is required now in all the country houses, and even where people live very plainly it is the custom for the lady of the house to wear a low necked gown and for the man of the house to don a dress suit, or, at all events, a dinner coat.

The dinner hour is also advancing, so that nine o'clock is no longer considered too late an hour to sit down at table. There is a great deal of good sense about this for people who live in the country, for it gives a chance to enjoy the sunset in the first of the evening and get back in time for dinner. It is said that Mr George Vanderbilt, at Biltmore, was one of the first people who started the idea of never dining or supping—for very often an evening meal at Biltmore is what used to be known as high tea—until nine or half-past. This calls for five or six o'clock tea, and makes that meal quite an event, and there is nothing more attractive on th piazza than afternoon tea wih people dropping in and with all the good things that are part and parcel of afternoon tea. This is an English custom that has taken very well here and is becoming more and more necessary to our comfort.

Any One Can Do This.

There are a great number of houses that cannot boast even of a piazza, but have mere a porch; this is rather a difficult matter to treat with, for naturally a porch is merely a place of ingress and egress to and from a house and cannot be furnished like a piazza. But on the other hand, it generally happens that a house of this kind is really old and is set in some few acres of ground a little back from the street, or, we will say, one acre. Then it is worth while to utilize the lawn and make that one's headquarters. A large umbrella can be bought—an artist umbrella or a Japanese umbrella—and a table of medium size; it will not require a great deal of ingenuity to fasten the umbrella to the centre of the table, and then you are all settled as to a place to eat.

Land in Cuba is not measured by the acre. A planter buys a "cabaleria" of land, not an acre. When it is said that a cabaleria of land is in the form of a circle, it will be seen at once that there is unlimited room for dispute. These circles overlap each other, and chunks are left out, and the result of a land transaction is bewildering.