OUR FASHION LETTER

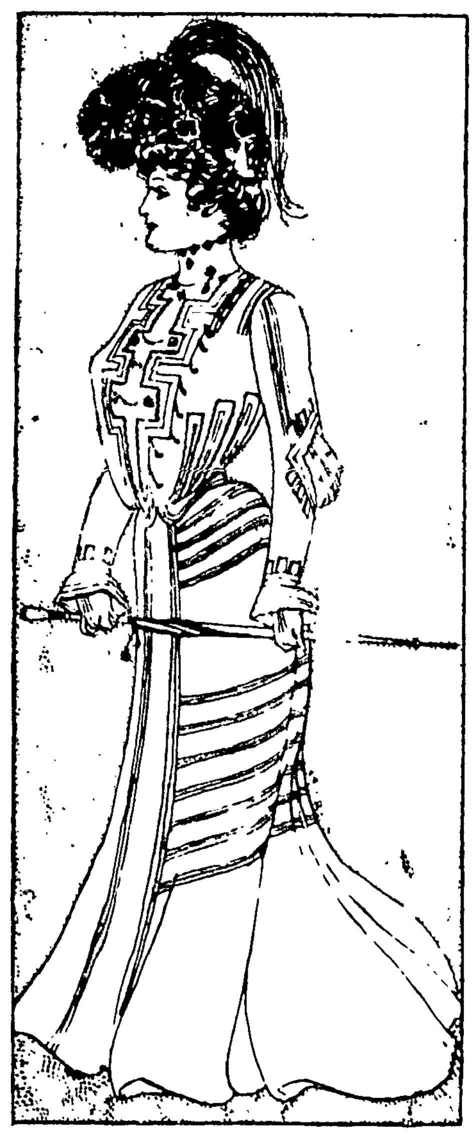
Russian Coatees and Blouses Are In High Favor.

VELVET ONCE MORE IN THE MODE

Spring Hats of the Tricorne Shape Seem to Be the Most Popular, and the Turban Promises to Eclipse the Sailor.

The zibelines and hairy textures of the autumn and winter season are to give place to smooth fabrics with the sheen of silk, and, although embroidered spots will be used, yet so far the fancy is entirely for plain materials. All the smart woolens have some admixture of silk, and the limp, soft style of finish is universal.

Coatees, blouses of the Russian type and the bolero will be quite the mode for spring toilets, but the smarter costume for bazaars, weddings and other special occasions will be made with a Louis coat, of which there are endless variations. Large collars are indispensable, and the Richelieu shape is



CHINA SILK DRESS.

copied to match the coat and is appliqued with lace and silk passementerie.

Velvet is very fashionable used in applique fashion, and there are scrolls and sprays of cut velvet introduced over lace, silk and plaited gauze with charming effect. Very handsome trimmings are composed of diamonds, medallions and scrolls cut out in velvet and placed on the material to outline the edges or make borders or bands. The velvet figures are then outlined with lace or passementerie.

The Spring Hats.

The turban has quite eclipsed the sailor hat and is altogether more modish even when adorned in the simplest fashion. Toques and hats generally are worn very forward and quite close at the back. There are a few styles which are immensely popular, and of these is the tricorne, made wider and more decided in front and invariably finished with a large bow of ribbon or velvet at the back.

Another model, similar to the tricorne, but rounded in front, has the back bow, or lace is draped round the brim and forms a little drooping cascade at the back. Many hats are made in the same style, with jet or sequin lace over the brim and finishing with

ECRU LACE WAIST.

the little tail at the back. Entire brims of small flowers or foliage are quite a feature in spring chapeaux.

Embroideries will be lavishly employed for smart day and evening gowns, and for the latter the raised applique designs in chiffon and ribbon work are as fragile as they are costly. There are, however, simple but effective embroideries which can be managed by those fond of fancy work, such as yokes, fronts and bands of satin or taffeta, worked with colored spots and tiny sprays or bias strappings to place between stitched straps of the dress material can be of contrasting colored silk with spots and tiny floral sprays or single blossoms.

The New Skirts.

The skirt of the moment shows many improvements, for it is free from exaggeration of all kinds. It is no longer strained tightly across the back, which mode was so dreadfully unbecoming to the stout woman.

Then there is a certain amount of frou frou round the feet, which is most becoming. There is a greater tendency than ever to shorten the waist at the

OF TUCKED VEILING

back and to lengthen it in front. To have this effect the skirt has to be slightly lifted at the back, which is infinitely preferable to the inward curve so often taken by the old tight skirt just below the waist.

With the skirt and waistband raised at the back we have evinced a craze for the short coat which is ever so smart and really becoming to those who are fairly slight. These little coats have a peculiar cachet when worn by the right woman. They must be accompanied by a large fanciful collar, otherwise they are apt to have a skimpy appearance.

Surely the collar, like the waistband, plays a very important part in the fashions of the hour. Some searchers after novelty predicted the disappearance of the lace and embroidered muslin collar, but events have proved them wrong, for never was the collar more popular and, after all, what a pretty fashion it is, giving an air of freshness to the oldest coat.

Coats and Blouses.

Delightful little short lace coats are seen, both for demitoilet and afternoon wear on the Riviera. Some are made after the style of the Russian blouse and others of the short sack shape. The tendency is either for a Russian

PINK CHIFFON AND ROSES.

blouse, with the basque, or for a short coat worn with a wide band. Some women look delightful in both, but for the slight figure the short coat has a peculiar chic about it.

These coats are not always made as plain sacks, but are very much improved specimens, falling in plaits or folds, which look charming in guipure and in the finer makes of lace.

Of course Irish crochet is the lace of the moment for day and also for evening wear, but lace of every make becomes daily more popular.

Fashion seems to be getting more elaborate, although the most beautiful gowns have an air of costly simplicity. After all, the simple frock requires more inventive ingenuity on the part of the wearer, as well as of the designer, to achieve success.

JUDIC CHOLLET.

A Young Commander

"Is that the chap we shipped under? Why, he hasn't grown a beard yet."

"Nevertheless he is the skipper of this craft, and a right smart one, too, as you'll find out if you cruise many months aboard of her."

"That may be, but I'd rather see a man on the quarter deck than a boy."

"What's the difference if the boy has a man's head on his shoulders? It isn't always those who have lived the longest in this world that know the most, as I have found out. Our skipper and I were shipmates on the voyage that he jumped from before the mast to the quarter deck."

"Don't see how he could do it," grumbled the one addressed as Tom.

"It was this way," began Bill Becket that same evening in the "dog watch" when he and his companion, Tom, who was also a boat steerer, were leaning idly over the weather rail, gazing out on the vast expanse of waters over which their vessel was bounding before a fair wind.

"It's little over four years now since I joined the Race Horse down in one of the Kanaka islands. I had run away from another ship and had been 'beach combed' in practical purgatory for tramp out. I got a chance on the Race Horse. We were going north to cruise in the Okhotsk sea. The skipper was before the mast then. He was a chap that didn't have to see a thing done more than once before he could do it himself.

"I happened to be boat steerer in the mate's boat, and Blue Fin, as we called the lad that is now captain, pulled the bow oar in the same craft. One morning just a little after daylight the lookout in the crosstrees raised a school of sperm whales. We had a pretty stiff breeze the night before, and the sea was still running high. We lowered away, however, our three boats — mate's, second mate's and third's.

"'I'll take that fellow up to windward!' called our officer as he pointed to a big whale that was playing around on the outside of the school as though he was placed there to protect the cows and calves that were huddled together in the middle from any danger.

"'Look out, Bill,' says the mate to me as he stood grasping the steering oar. 'Look out, man, and don't miss him. There's a good hundred barrels there.'

"'Aye, aye, sir,' said I. 'Lay me on close enough, and I'll drive both irons into him clear to the sockets.'

"There was no danger but what he'd do it, for the fellow didn't know what it was to be afraid of a whale. I wasn't going to take any chances, so I waited till the boat almost touched the big brute, then I let fly both harpoons, one after another, and sang out, 'Stern all!' When the boys were backing so as to give the whale room to play, I went aft to change places with the mate, and he walked forward to his station in the bow to kill the fish with a lance.

"Now, this whale was one of those kind of fellows that take his medicine easy at first, but fights like fury before he hists his red flag. He didn't 'sound,' but lay and wallowed for a minute or two, then began to swing round so as to get sight of us.

"'He's going to give us a tussle,' called the mate.

"'Aye, aye; he's a fighter,' says I.

"Then I caught sight of Blue Fin's face. All the other chaps were glancing over their shoulders and beginning to get a little shaky, but he sat on his thwart with his hand grasping the oar, just as quiet and unconcerned as if he were in a skiff on a mill pond and not within half a cable's length of a mad bull sperm that threatened to send him and his shipmates to Davy Jones' locker at any minute.

"'Stand by to jump!' called the mate. 'He's coming for us!'

"Now, you know there's no boat quick enough to get out of the way of a whale when he makes a rush, so the only thing to do is to leave her. The other men sprang to their feet, but the boy still sat there, and I began to think he was paralyzed with fright.

"'Stand up to jump, Blue Fin!' I called. 'And when you go leap straight for the beggar and not from him.'

"The lad smiled and nodded his head and, standing up, unshipped his oar from the thole pin, held it ready and faced about.

"Then the whale started.

"'Jump!' yelled the mate.

"The next instant we were all floundering around in the water, while the bull caught the boat in his mouth, crushed it to pieces and sounded.

"The third mate, who had just killed one small chap, was not far away, so he came and picked us up, all but the mate. No one ever saw him afterward. He must have been fouled in the line and gone down.

"We got the rest of the school, but all hands felt bad at the loss of the officer. I couldn't help telling our skipper how cool Blue Fin was through the whole thing, and when he shoved the others ahead he rated his own boat steerer third mate and ordered Blue Fin to take charge of the bow in his craft.

"I tell you the boy was proud enough, but he had nerve and good luck, both of which are everything to a whaler. This was destined to be an unfortunate voyage for the After officers. The whales were plenty in the Okhotsk sea, and there was hardly a day that we didn't see something of them.

"One afternoon we again lowered away for a right whale. Our boat was close alongside, but the skipper said:

"'Don't you meddle with him; he's mine.' So of course we hung back, only standing by to lend a hand in case we were needed.

"Blue Fin made a pretty dart. He buried his first iron about six feet aft the bow hole, and the other he planted in the hump as the fellow rolled. It was a death blow, but before the whale began to spout blood he brought his flukes around, caught the boat before the boys could get out of the way and stove her to pieces. We picked up and picked up the crew. I grabbed the 'old man' just as he was going down, and when I hauled him up I saw that he was hurt badly and was unconscious. He was smashed up in a frightful manner and never recovered.

"Next morning after we had lashed the dead body of the captain in the starboard gangway, where the whale that had killed him was moored with chains to the port side of the ship. Poor Blue Fin felt awful bad, and he kept mourning as the mate read the burial service, saying:

"'Oh, if I hadn't struck the whale that last blow!' 'Twas the second one that touched his 'life,' and our cap'n's too.'

"'But shipmate,' went on the boat steerer, 'it was to be, and it's the way of the world, I suppose. One man mounts to a position through the death of another, just as a new ship is built to take the place of a craft that has found a bed on the rocks.'"

"Yes, there's a great deal of truth in what you say, Bill. But how was it that your cap'n's loss rated Blue Fin skipper?"

"He wasn't skipper in every sense of the word, but 'twas this way. The others that were left were the same as you and I — good sailors and good whalers — but they knew nothing of navigation. Blue Fin, of all our company, was the only one who could handle a quadrant or 'work up a sight.' As I said, the whales were plenty, and we didn't want to leave the grounds till the season drove us out, for we were making money, so we finished our cruise, and when we reached Honolulu we were full to the hatches with oil and bone.

"There was some talk of shipping another man to take the vessel home, but the agent and the American consul said, 'If that young man knew enough to bring the craft safely out of the Okhotsk sea, he knows enough to find his way to New Bedford.' They just engaged another mate 'by the run,' who was a navigator, and gave the boy charge of the ship.

"We made a quick passage around the Horn, and the owners were so much pleased with Blue Fin that they gave him command of the Race Horse on the next voyage, and while away on that cruise they built him this one here, the Grampus, and that's how the lad became skipper so young. It goes to prove the truth of what I said a few moments ago, that 'it's not always gray hairs which cover the wisest head.' A boy is sometimes more fit to command than a man who has seen twice or thrice his number of years."

THE COACHMAN'S PASSING.

When Railroads Came, the Old Timers Disappeared From Earth.

One often wonders what became of the old coachman when railways drove the last of the mails off the road and those who had known few pleasures that were not associated with the movements of lively teams and the hum of rolling wheels or genial intercourse with the traveling world could enjoy those things no more. There must be deep pathos in the unwritten romance of that period. With few exceptions the drivers of stagecoaches had no aptitude or inclination for other work, though they were masters of their own.

Many a time in boyhood I have heard amateur whips pay admiring tribute to the professionals of an old generation who, for all their dissolute habits and uncouthness, were workmen to the core with hands as gentle as a woman's. Bob Pointer, who taught many Oxford undergraduates how to handle an awkward team, was one of the hard drinkers, but nobody ever saw him in "difficulties" to which his skill was not equal. His wise maxims are still remembered and worth remembering:

"Never let your horses know you are driving them, or, like women, they may get restive. Don't pull and haul and stick your elbows akimbo. Keep your hands as though you were playing the piano. Let every horse be at work and don't get flurried. Handle their mouths lightly. Do all this, and you might even drive four young ladies without ever ruffling their feathers or their tempers." — Henry H. S. Pearse in Outing.

Quito Water Porters.

Around the fountain in one of the principal squares of Quito assemble every morning the city's aguadores. These water porters differ from the less energetic ones of some South American cities in carrying their jars on their backs instead of on the backs of mules. Their earthen jars are deep, have a wide mouth and hold about forty liters.

The porter carries it on his shoulder fastened with leather straps. He never detaches himself from his jar, either to fill it or to transfer its contents to that of his customer.

He turns his back to the fountain so that the jar comes under one of the jets of water, listens to the sound of the water in the jar, and his ear is so well trained that he always walks away at the exact moment when it is filled to the brim.

Arrived at your house, he goes to your jar, makes a deep bow and disappears behind a torrent of water. I could never receive without laughing the visit of my aguadore, the respectful little man who bowed to me behind a cataract of water. —"From the Andes to Para."

Rejuvenated Women.

It is an extraordinary but incontestable fact that some women at the age when most people die undergo a sort of natural process of rejuvenation — hair and teeth grow again, the wrinkles disappear from the skin and sight and hearing reacquire their former sharpness. A Marquise de Mirabeau is an example of this rare and remarkable phenomenon. She died at the age of eighty-six, but a few years before her death she became in appearance quite young again. The same change happened to a nun of the name of Marguerite Verdur, who at the age of sixty-two lost her wrinkles, regained her sight and grew several new teeth. When she died, ten years later, her appearance was almost that of a young girl.

His Difficulty.

The witty Samuel Wilberforce, bishop of Oxford, had no patience with admirers who persisted in regarding him, with others of his cloth, as extraordinarily important.

A lady who met him one day at dinner evidently felt obliged to keep the conversation at a high level. She began with much solemnity:

"My lord, you must have had a great many serious questions to deal with in the course of your life. What is the most tremendous difficulty you have had to encounter?"

The bishop's napkin was slipping away from him.

"Keeping a dinner napkin on this silk apron of mine," said he as he clutched at it.

The Wedding Ring.

A long time ago the wedding ring was worn on the forefinger and was thickly studded with precious stones. People who have seen the old pictures of the Madonna in Rome will remember that in one or two of them there is a glistening ring on the forefinger of her right hand, but with [illegible] came the wearing of the wedding ring on the third finger rather than the first.

The old story of there being a vein that runs from that finger to the heart is nonsense. Its use originated in this way: The priest first put it on the thumb, saying, "In the name of the Father;" on the forefinger, adding, "In the name of the Son;" on the second finger, repeating, "In the name of the Holy Ghost," and on the third finger, ending with "Amen." And there it stayed.

The Elder Brother Lives Longer.

Your elder brother or sister will enjoy a longer life than yourself. Examination of a thousand pairs of brothers and the same number of pairs of sisters revealed the fact that the elder brother had an average life of six years more than the younger, while in the case of the girls the excess was slightly less. These figures do not prove that the younger will die before the elder. It may be that there is a difference of ten years between the dates of birth, so that your elder brother, although having a longer life, may die before you.

THE MYSTERY OF BOWLDER HOUSE

A Story of Colonial Days in Old New York in Two Parts.

(By S. E. HAMPTON.)

PART ONE.

New York City, when the red coated soldiery of King George walked its streets with martial tread, or threatening swagger, was not the New York of to-day. Perhaps there is more romance now within its greater boundaries, but it is of a more prosaic kind and not tempered with that element of danger which can alone make romance fascinating. No menacing foreign foemen can now disturb the tranquil pleasures of its citizens. They are secure in a peace beyond and above the reach of all oppression, except that which is self-inflicted if it exists at all.

Where now huge piles of modern masonry show the persistent advance of civilization there was then unredeemed wilderness or at best only green fields. Where now stands the imposing tomb of an honored citizen and hero, and thousands throng yearly to do reverence to the immortal Grant, then a rugged bluff and huge bowlders stood sentinel and frowned down upon the placid Hudson as it flowed on and on to mingle with the everchanging sea, and yet long before the obnoxious tea was thrown into Boston Harbor, and resolute patriots had set unrelenting and stern faces towards the glimmering Star of Liberty that was destined to flood the world with newer and purer light, tradition tells us that this same rugged bluff was to yield to the hand of man and nature's face be eternally scarred to supply his wants.

The first house builded here was of curious shape, and undoubtedly the original design of its builder. Some description of this structure is necessary to the after events of this story, so we will tell what tradition has handed down about it.

The precise date of its erection has never been told but it certainly was just after 1700 had forced a new century on the dial. The builder was of Dutch lineage but absolutely nothing was known of his antecedents. His workmen had come with him in a schooner from nobody knew where, and after completing their task it sailed away with all on board except the old baron, as his few nearest neighbors came to call him.

Why he built such a massive and odd shaped house to live in may have puzzled those curious enough to call there, but they could only surmise from the outside, they were never admitted and their reception always showed plainly that they were not wanted. What they saw was a solid structure covering considerable ground space and slanting up on six irregular sides to resemble as nearly as possible one of the nearby bowlders and meant, no doubt, to look like one, only of larger size, from a distance. The windows on each side looked like long slits in the solid rock. They were very narrow, too narrow for even a small sized man to squeeze through—while the narrow panes of glass were hidden except from a direct view by the immense thickness of the walls. The doorway, too, was very narrow and very heavy. It was studded with great nailheads to almost hide the wood, and showed plainly that strength was the main desire of the builder.

It was a long time before any description of the inside could be given, simply because no one was admitted to see it, before events forced an entrance, or rather, events made an entrance so necessary that men demanded and the owner reluctantly permitted.

It came about in this way, so the story runs. River piracy and shore robbery grew so alarmingly frequent that some decided measure had to be taken to stop the losses. The regular authorities seemed inadequate to the task and bands of volunteers took up the search for clues.

It was discovered that a fast sailing sloop, helped along by silently plied oars often run up the river nights and anchored off Bowlder House. The watch set upon this strange visitor soon reported that a beautiful woman always landed and passed through the narrow entrance of Bowlder House to remain an hour when she left as she came and the sloop sailed away. Always she came with a burden but never carried one away, so it naturally bred a suspicion that must be investigated. Plans were made to intercept this night visitor and, if possible, find out what she carried, and who she was.

For this duty three men were selected; that number being deemed adequate to the task. They were to creep silently to a station along the path after dark when failure to capture the unsuspecting woman seemed impossible.

They did fail, however, because she diverged from the path just before reaching their place of concealment, and before they realized what was happening, she was speeding for the house as though she had seen them or was aware of their presence and purpose.

It would never do to let her escape so easily. They would be the laughingstock of their friends, so they gave wild chase to overtake her, but she proved too fleet of foot and they reached the door to find it closed as though she had not just passed through.

Consulting hurriedly they decided