

Thursday, April 4, 1872.

## WHAT SHE THINKS OF IT.

She says: I have just come in from the street, and I am exasperated, furious, savage, in short, I am in a passion, and if I could have my way—

"But what is it all about?" you ask.

Well, just look at the bottom of my dress skirt. Does it look as if it belonged to a decent woman or a tramp? All dragged and splashed, and dripping over my nice kid boots! Can you fancy anything more abominable? All the morning I've been in the lower part of the town, where there are black pools of the nastiest dirt at all the crossings, and where the middle of Broadway looks like a miniature Lethe. It isn't mud, this horrible mixture that clings to me; that won't brush off my shoes, and that attaches itself so pertinaciously to the fabric of my dress that it is well nigh ingrained in it. No, this is a paste composed of the filthiest filth of the city and I have created the fact every time I have stepped at a crossing this morning to gather up my drapery hungrily with one hand, the other being devoted to my muff and bundle, and felt that I was not half doing it, and knew as I waded out into the slush that my skirt was sopping up all these abominations, carrying them to my clean white stockings. Then I thought some bitter things, I can tell you!

My street dress is not a demi-train. I am not quite so much of an idiot as that amounts to. It is made just as short as the present style will allow. But it is altogether too long for the street, for it just touches the dirt, whereas it ought to clear it entirely. Then I shouldn't be bothered with thinking of my dress on the street. This conservative idea of fashion granted to every woman about a year ago; but it has been her will to withdraw it from her humble slaves, and now, in defiance of custom, I should have my dress made as short as I wore it three years ago, I should probably subject myself to unpleasant apprehensions in public. I have to choose between that and comfort and cleanliness. And this is why I am so angry. Why will the women be so foolish, I should like to know, as to let their dressmakers, instead of their own common sense, decide in such matters? You say I am one of them, and that I ought to set the example. As if it would do the least good! I might go about with my dress shortened to my ankles, to my hearts content, and get laughed at and stared at and jered at and perhaps worse treated, for my pains; but as long as so-called French dressmakers and women of wealth shall decide that dresses must stop up all the nastiness of New York street, I should have no followers. And if I have to elect between a soiled dress and being allowed to go quietly without notice, on my way through the streets, I shall choose the former. But I don't like it, all the same. I want to know if there is any woman who does—especially those who have to clean their own dress skirts? Oh, how many times have I over this nasty work, vowed I would never again go on the street with my dress touching the pavement! And then how I grew cowardly the very next time I went out, and stealing into a corner stealthily took out the pins which held it out of the dirt, hoping that I should find clean spots to walk in, only to be deceived as usual.

And just so long as I have to endure this mortification of spirit, it is useless to talk to me about giving women any more privileges or any more rights. They already have the right to dress themselves as they choose, and they abuse it shamefully. They have the right to dress themselves in decent, not over-costly garments, made in a sensible manner. Do they do it? Let me see them making a proper use of what rights they already have before you talk of giving them any more!

And I never believe they are fit to have anything to do with business or politics as long as they haven't sense enough to lift their skirts out of the dust and the mud. I should like to see a man submitting to that sort of thing! The idea of sweeping into Wall street on a muddy morning in a train a quarter of a yard long! That will do. I am too angry to say any more, and I must go and clean the mud from the bottom of my dress. Ugh!

As after thought, which comes to her while she is grumbling and stewing with all her might and holding her head on one side—by her nose very much turned up—to avoid the cloud of dust which arises from the desecrated garment.

It is the height of stupidity to have any dress which is intended to be worn on the street made so long that you must pin it up any time. The pins tear the dress or slip out. Why not have a long skirt for the house and a short one for the street, if you are so much of a peacock that you can't rest unless you have something dragging along after you?

When I come to think seriously about it, a short dress for the street is more modest than a long one. It may be shortened to the ankles, but still it is the more modest of the two; for there is no occasion for lifting it. How is a woman to calculate just how high to lift her dress when she is in a hurry? In nine cases out of ten she either lifts it too high or she doesn't lift it high enough. On one side she shows more boot-top and white stocking than she has a mind to, and may provoke a passing leer; but, on the other side, the drapery flows down into the mud or the dust, and thus she is a disgusting object all around. Oh, let I haven't any more patience!

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