



THE NEWEST FRENCH FASHIONS

Modelled for

The Young Englishwoman.

SEPTEMBER 1



# THE YOUNG ENGLISHWOMAN.

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## THE DIARY OF A DISAPPOINTED YOUNG MAN.

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ST. SEBASTIAN-ON-SEA, *Aug. 13th, 186—*.

WHY did I come here? Why? The proximate cause was, that London is hateful and a bore; hot and dusty, and altogether intolerable. And it seems to me that it is a case of Scylla and Charybdis.—(Hang that hackneyed phrase! Why doesn't somebody invent a new one to the same purpose?). St. Sebastian is hot and dusty, and hateful, and a bore too. But then, is there any place on the face of this crooked and perverse earth worth going to? Bad as this is, I suppose it is as good as any other. Staring, and glaring, and noisy, it is resonant with German bands, and swarming with a Bedlam-broke-loose of girls gone mad on cockatoo hats and striped petticoats. Still St. Sebastian is probably as good as any other place. And, for one thing, if I cannot keep out of the way of the perambulating brass-bands, I *can* of the other nuisance—the walking man-traps. (I counted thirty of them on my way up from the station. Why on earth *did* I count them?). I have chosen the quietest and most retired lodgings in St. Sebastian, and I can shut myself up and read; and only sally forth at night, when the birds of prey have gone to roost, and left the Parade to me and some half-dozen other quiet cigar-smokers.

*Aug. 14th.*—Adieu to all fond, delusive dreams of quiet and retirement! I was seduced into taking these rooms by the treacherous promise of a stretch of green lawn beneath the windows, "quite private," as the landlady assured me. "No fear of being overlooked *here*," I said to myself; for if there is one thing I hate more than another, it is that impertinent sea-side freedom which looks into your windows and leaves its own wide open; and turns the vaunted privacy of the Englishman's castle into the street, in the promotion of a sort of *al-fresco* life, which is supposed to be so charming and delightful after the stiffness and constraint of town ceremony. Well! at least, I thought I had secured an immunity from these unpleasant freedoms in the retirement of these lodgings; when, lo! no sooner am I fairly installed in them, than immediately after-breakfast this morning the lawn, which was so tranquil yesterday, is alive with croquet and chatter. Creatures in looped-up skirts and fast little hats literally swarm beneath my window, and carry on vociferous discussions on blue, red, and white, and hoops, and mallets, and everything else besides. Jupiter! how is a man to read or write, or pursue any rational employment, with such a senseless babble in



his ears? I suppose I must shut down the windows, and submit to be stifled, in order to gain a sort of half-quiet. Down it goes! A girl with a grey feather looks up to see who did it, and seeing a young man in a morning-dress, with a saturnine expression of countenance, looks down again and colours up, going through a little farce of modesty. Ugh! I say to myself, as I stride back again to my desk! I'm too old a bird now to be caught with any amount of chaff. Experience has its value, disagreeable as the process of gaining it is. Thanks to Amy Marchmont, I wear armour of proof now.

Confound those croquet-balls! And my windows being on the ground-floor, I have the satisfaction of seeing the whole progress of the game; and of being seen besides, let me choose what corner of the room I may. This is overlooking and being overlooked with a vengeance. Ring for the landlady.

"I thought you told me these lawns were private?"

"Yes, sir," with an odious cheerfulness; "and so they are. Only the family opposite and ourselves have the right of entrance."

"Why there are a dozen people there now"—trying to scowl down the offensive geniality of manner.

"A dozen, sir!" going to the window. "Oh yes, sir—it's all right; they're all out this morning, and they are a large family. Such a nice family too, sir; I'm sure they make the lawn quite lively."

"A little too lively for me," I retort, firmly. "I must find something a little less so at the end of the week."

"Very well, sir," the landlady returns, and quits the room, her exuberant cheerfulness only a little abated. What the deuce can the woman have to be cheerful about?

*Aug. 15th.*—The "lively" family are at it again. Con—bless them, I mean! and I believe they have increased and multiplied during the night. Instead of a dozen, they seem to be twenty, this morning. I live in a state of siege—windows closed, blinds drawn down. By the way, I may as well reconnoitre, and ascertain precisely the enemy's force. So! Girl in grey; do. do.; Hobbledehoy in deer-stalker, and got up no end; young prig; girl in nankeen, with blue feather; do. in pink—pretty ankles—knows it; wears short skirts and swell boots. Boy in knickerbockers; do.; creature with tawny hair flowing all over her shoulders—rather pretty—hair very much so, especially when the light catches it—like rippling gold. Hope it'll grow darker as she gets older, or turn orange colour (any other sort of red is simply gold), or do something to prevent its turning out a glittering net to catch men-fish in. Pretty little creature it is too! like one of Millais' children; the way she tripped across and stopped the rolling of that ball, whilst the sunlight played in her long hair as it floated behind her, was—upon my word—quite natural. Such grace the child has! Let us hope, in the interest of mankind, that she may get the small-pox, or twist her spine, or something, before she grows up. Pity it's a sin to assist nature in this way! We crush noxious insects in the larvæ, we nip pernicious plants in the bud; but we let the embryo flirt and jilt develop into fatal beauty, to sting our hearts, and poison our lives, all for want of a little merciful and seasonable cruelty.

*Aug. 17.*—I have been reading deeply these last two days—chiefly in the cynical school of philosophy. What knowing fellows those old heathens were! and how thoroughly they understood life! And women! Modern writers may sentimentalize and babble as they like about the social status of woman marking the progress and advancement of the nation. No country can get on if it is woman-ridden; no man can rise who is clogged and held down by a woman. Didn't Cleopatra ruin Marc Antony, and was not Coriolanus betrayed by his own wife and mother? Could I not multiply instance upon instance of the misery and destruction that these "weak impediments"



have wrought in the grand projects and designs of men? Is not the great country of the West—great by reason of the strong, active brains of its sons, ever ready to push forward and onward in the vast field of progress—is it not rendered in a measure ridiculous by the presumptuous claims and the ambitious aspirations of its women? Depend upon it the Mussulman is right when he shuts them up in household cages, and keeps down their mischievous intellect below the par of that of British school-children. I began life with that sort of chivalrous folly which exalted woman on a pedestal, and bowed down to her as to a goddess, or an angel. But that folly is past and over for ever, thanks to a clear and vigorous understanding, and to—Amy Marchmont.

I could rave at the weak folly which makes me shrink from writing that name, which makes me writhe as I see it lying harmlessly enough on the paper before me. She is a thing of the past,—that false, treacherous syren, with her thousand spells and fascinations to lure men on to shipwreck. She is my embodied *experience*; the treasure which I have saved out of the sinking of the good ship Faith and Trust—a treasure worth the saving too. And now I start afresh on the journey of life, with experience for my guide, and ambition for my mistress. Hal Netherclift may mount the woolsack yet,—thanks to Amy Marchmont! There was a time when she threatened to come between me and all the great aims of life; now the road is clear and unencumbered again. Onward then!

I seize Blackstone straightway, as the first step on the high road which leads to the goal I have set before my eyes, when just as I am deep in study, a sound of tongues comes up from the lawn. I pitch my book across the room, and groan, "Women again!"

I lift the end of the blind, just to see if the girl with the pretty ancles is out this morning. Not that I care; only that, being idle, I am inclined to wonder about something. Yes, there she is, and there are the whole family, disgustingly "lively" as Mrs. What's-her-name says. Yes, there they are—three greys, and a pink, and a blue, and a hobbledehoy; and two knickerbockers, and the golden-haired fairy of a child—every mother's son and daughter of them. And there they have been all day long, ever since I came here. Don't they bathe, I wonder? Don't they take their work down to the beach? Don't they dress themselves out, and walk up and down at the Band? Don't they hire basket-carriages, and take drives into the country?

No, they don't. They don't do anything but inhabit the lawn. They sew there, walk there, talk there, transact all their family business there, excepting eating, drinking, and sleeping (in fact, I have known them take their luncheon there in a sort of picnic, and even their tea one hot night), and carry on their amusements, all in the lawn, which I was led to believe would be "strictly private" to me!

Mrs. Murton, my landlady, explains their indifference to the gaieties of the place by the fact of their being residents, and, she says, "The residents don't mix with the visitors." Here's a new caste! I thought snobbery had gone as far as it could go, without this. "Lord! what fools these mortals be!" as Puck says. The "residents" get up a supposed superiority to the visitors, looking upon them as adventurers, &c.; and the visitors, in return, get up *their* superiority to the residents, classing them, as a body, as lodging-house keepers. So, so! what a pitiable, laughable thing this poor little human conceit is; into what absurd littlenesses it leads men.

Aug. 18.—Mrs. Murton has been giving me a long account of the Lawn Family, as I have got to call them. She is rather a talkative, presuming sort of person, and she treats me in a sort of compassionate, coaxing way, which is, to say the least of it, provoking. "Let me take it in, Mary," I heard her say yesterday, to the "slavey," who was bringing me another chop, the first having been sent to table unfit to eat;



"let me take it into the poor young gentleman. *I'm a mother myself.*" What the deuce did she mean? What had her being a mother got to do with my chop? And what makes her treat me like a sick baby? "The poor young gentleman!" Surely I haven't got "jilted" written on my forehead for all the world to read. *Disappointed* is the cant word for it, I believe, but not the right one; jilted, fooled, tricked, if you will, but assuredly not *disappointed*! No, Miss Marchmont, I can think of you without the least feeling of disappointment; with some indignation, with a good deal of contempt, with more gratitude for the merciful escape I have had, but, I repeat it again, with no disappointment.

But for Mrs. Murton's account of the family. She was clearing away the breakfast things, and taking orders for dinner, when her quick eyes wandered to the garden. "A sole, sir? Yes, sir. And then I should recommend a curry; I can make a curry with any-one, I assure you, sir. You shall try it to-day, and if you don't like it, why then, sir, you needn't have it again, that's all. But I learnt to make it from General Sinclair's own man, who had been in India with his master. The General lodged with me here for two seasons running. Oh! there's Miss Diana out again. I *am* glad—to be sure! She looks but poorly yet poor thing! but then she never *was* so hearty-looking as her sisters; more delicate-looking altogether. But I'm glad to see her back again." Leaving her tray altogether now, and going up to the window—"A sweet creature she always was, to be sure; and they're a nice family altogether—so full of life! Miss Jeannette and Miss Eve, the two eldest young ladies, lodged here when they first came, three years ago—that is, they slept here, because their Ma and Pa was living with them at that time, and they hadn't bedrooms enough; and my house was so convenient, just across the garden, that they didn't mind running across night and morning. And Miss Die—as they call her—used to come too, and all of them in turn. And they often step across to see me now, and have a chat; and dear me! they quite wake me up, they do, they're so full of fun. There's nothing like young people for taking the world on its best side. I know all about it; I'm a mother myself. But begging your pardon, sir, for running on so with my chatter, and you wanting to be busy." Exit Mrs. Murton, with the tray.

Bless the woman's tongue! she does run on with a vengeance; no amount of indifference checks her. And what *does* she mean by "being a mother herself?"

So there is another member of this inexhaustible family turned up. An invalid, it seems. Is she like the rest, I wonder?

I have been to the window to see. No, she is not like the others—not like the grey girls, or the pink, or the blue; at least she is something like the yellow-haired fairy. I had a good view of her, for there happens to be a garden-bench just opposite my window, and they had brought out cushions, and made quite a throne there for this new-comer. They all cluster about her like a swarm of bees, and the buzz of chatter is worse than the everlasting croquet-balls. Miss Diana,—wasn't that the name?—is really quite a sweet-looking creature; she has not the horridly rampant, robust characteristics of the rest. She is fair, her hair is golden brown, and her eyes so deep and dark even at this distance; she sits amongst her cushions like a drooping lily, and the rest wait upon her as if she were a queen. But bah! why have I wasted a whole half-hour in looking at a pale girl? Is it worth the future Lord Chancellor's while to descend to such toys and trifles?

Aug. 18th.—Mrs. Murton has just been in to inquire if I would object to a lady "just looking round the room?" With the view of taking it, of course. The lady has been in, bowing, and smirking, and apologizing, as earnestly as if the process involved turning me bodily out of the window, amongst the croquet-hoops! She seemed pleased with the apartments. Well, on the whole so am I. The woman is obtrusively cheerful,



but then she is a good cook, and scrupulously clean, and my experience of chambers, teaches me to know the value as well as the rarity of these advantages; and then, the family out there on the lawn are certainly not so annoyingly lively as they were at first, or, perhaps, I have got accustomed to the annoyance. It amounts to the same thing in the end, whichever way you take it. I don't care to move—moving is a bore, and I might not find the move for the better. I wonder if those two women have concluded any bargain yet. Ring for the “slavey.” “Ask your mistress to come here for moment.”

“Mistress is engaged, sir, with a lady—about the apartments.”

Confound the idiot! As if I didn't know *that*! Women of all classes are inferior in intellect; but in the lower classes, their inferiority brings them almost on a level with the brute creation.

“My good girl,” I reply, speaking slowly and deliberately, that I may not be accused of irritation, “that is exactly why I want to see her. I am not going to leave the apartments.”

“Oh sir!”—with a bounce—“then I'll tell misses so.”

Which she does at once, as I am a witness. The two women, having by this time reached the hall, and the door of my room being open, I overhear the “slavey” making a dash at it.

“If you please, ma'am, the gentleman in the parlour says he doesn't mean to go.”

This brings Mrs. Murton into my presence.

“I have decided to keep on the apartments,” I say, in rather a defiant tone.

“Oh, well, sir,” with a lurking relief in her tone, “then of course I couldn't turn you out, sir.”

Is it the motherly instinct in Mrs. Murton, which makes her prefer to retain me as a lodger, or is it as the slavey in her simplicity has since hinted, that the smirking lady only wanted the rooms for a fortnight, when she knows that I have six weeks at my command? What does it matter which it is? What does *anything* matter as far as that goes?

There goes the croquet-balls again! I wonder who is playing to-day, and whether Miss Diana is out. Yes, there she is, installed in state on her bench. She is wrapped in a crimson shawl, and her pale, fair face shows well against it. She makes an interesting figure. I wonder what's the matter with her?

Aug. 18.—Mrs. Murton tells me that poor Miss Die is suffering from a “disappointment.” “Such a nice young man as he seemed, to be sure,” she said, “and Miss Die and he seemed so happy together. I used to watch them, many's the time, out here in the garden together. But it's all off, now. I don't know the rights of it, but the housemaid gave me to understand he hadn't behaved well, and he's gone off to India now. Miss Die took ill just after, and she's only just got about again.” Humph! Then it's not consumption, but heart-break, and she has survived it. “Men have died, and worms have eaten them, but not for love.” And so, women. At all, events I have one thing to be thankful for, that I have come in for this stage of the affair rather than for the other, when they made love in the garden under my nose—windows, I mean. A pair of lovers, deceiving and deceived, would have been a delectable prospect—worse than croquet-hoops—worse than the Babel of tongues going on at this moment. Does Miss Die talk, I wonder? Is that compatible with heart-ache? I lift the blind, and look out to ascertain. Yes, she talks, and smiles; and to-day she is busy, like the rest, with several yards of blue muslin, which they are manipulating, I suppose with the intention of converting it into some garment or another. Heart-break in women, then, does not suspend any of the natural functions, does not affect the social capabilities, does not produce misanthropy, or savagery, or cynicism. Observe the distinc-



tion between the sexes. Miss Die has an illness, and has done with it; a man, under the same circumstances, would probably—ahem!—act very differently!

Curious study this girl! I believe I shall not find it unprofitable to vary Blackstone and Coke a little with the peculiar idiosyncrasies of human nature. A lawyer, of all men, should understand the workings and windings of the human mind. I should like to know if that girl's eyes are blue or brown, and whether it is the shade of the lashes which makes them so dark. Rather pretty—as well as I can see at this distance—that contrast of dark eyes and golden-brown hair. What colour *are* they? Stay; I have my opera-glass in the next room. There, lifting the edge of the blind cautiously, and drawing the curtain forward as a sort of screen, I can manage to reconnoître without being perceived. So! Well! she's a pretty creature. Can't tell the colour of her eyes, but they are large and lustrous. Dainty little hands, too. I like pretty hands—they are a *feature*; delicate, feminine hands these; Amy Marchmont's were large, bony, cruel, made up of muscles it seemed to me; white enough, perhaps, but as different from those graceful little fingers out yonder as the flesh of a spring chicken is from that of a full-grown Cochín-China. It's a warm day, and she has taken off her hat and tossed it on to the grass; and Fairy has just gone behind her and taken the comb—or whatever held it up—out of her hair, and it ripples down below her waist in a golden shower. Such lovely, exquisite hair! I don't wonder that that mischievous Fairy dances and claps her hands with glee at the sight.

“Any fish to-day, sir?”

I start round, and there stands Mrs. Murton. I pocket my glass surreptitiously, and I feel myself turning very red as she repeats her question—

“Any fish to-day, sir?”

“Yes, yes,” I reply testily, “a chop.”

“It was *fish*, sir, I was asking about; the man's waiting, only I couldn't make you hear before, sir. I suppose it was the noise in the garden. And you ordered a fowl this morning, if you remember, sir, not a chop.”

Confound the woman! How long had she been there, I wonder? “Couldn't make me hear,” she said. It's not exactly agreeable to be caught looking through an opera-glass at one's neighbours. Women always were in the way, and always will be!

Aug. 30.—We have progressed wonderfully during the last fortnight. I am actually acquainted with all the Travers' family affairs—that is their name, it seems; and being an idle young man, awfully bothered to get rid of the time which hangs heavy on his hands, I have condescended to interest myself in these matters, just to pass the time, as our neighbours over the water say; and besides, they really are an interesting family, these Travers. I have got to know them all intimately, excepting the old folks, and they never show up,—not on the lawn, at all events, and I don't frequent the Parade, or the streets, but live the life of a hermit here. And the Travers family have become to me something like what Picciola, or the Prison Flower, was to What's-his-name, or what the mouse was to the other prisoner-fellow.

Once I saw a cap—and a face under it—at one of the windows of the house opposite—a worn, anxious face, as my glass told me. I suppose it was the mother's. The father's I have never seen. He is a speculative, visionary sort of individual, always busy about some grand scheme or project, which is to astonish the world; and make his own fortune: for they are poor I find, and always just on the point of success when the bubble bursts and precipitates him into a despair. The young prig in the deer-stalkers has had to be removed, for want of funds, from the military tutor's, where he was preparing to pass his examination for a commission, and he is now idly lounging about at home, wasting his energies, and growing rapidly too old for the profession he has set his heart upon. Consequently, he does a great deal of grumbling, curses the



family "luck," in terms which distress his sisters, and declares no good will ever come to *them*—the family.

Then Fairy's music-lessons have had to be given up for want of a piano—the handsome 180-guinea Broadwood, which they brought from "dear old Horwood," (wherever that is,) having had to be sold lately, to supply fuel to the ever-devouring fire of speculation which burns in the father's brain; and those grey dresses are last year's pattern, and now they are getting quite shabby, but Jeannette proposes to turn them, and "do them up" themselves, and then she says they will do very well for the rest of this summer; and new dresses are quite out of the question, everybody agrees. The blue muslin was for Fairy; but then it was a "remnant" (what on earth's that?) which Bessie saw cheap, and Fairy wants so little to make her a skirt, and poor little thing! she hadn't a single cool dress for this burning weather.

And I have found out that, in the furtherance of his great designs, the Paterfamilias demands solitude and quiet, wherefore his docile family vacate the house, and leave him the premises to himself.

How have I discovered all this? In the simplest possible manner. This last week has been intolerably hot, so that I have been compelled to open my windows, keeping the blinds always carefully drawn down, and the Travers girls have, through the same cause, been constrained to move their favourite bench into the shade of some trees—immediately under my windows, in fact. And as sound ascends, and the girls speak in a clear, ringing, youthful treble, I have the benefit of all the family details.

I am not a spy—whatever some ill-conditioned caviller may choose to insinuate—I am *not* an underhand listener to other people's affairs. I scorn the base insinuation! I defy the slander! I am the confidential friend of the family, in whose faithful breast their secrets are as safe as in their own, and whose brain is perpetually at work to help theirs in making a way out of their difficulties. Did I not lie awake all night because Eustace (the first knickerbocker boy) had to be removed from the care of the private tutor, with whom he has been studying, because "papa cannot afford to keep him there," and Eve and Die were sighing over the necessity all last evening, as they sat on the bench, as close together as love-birds on a bough, plying their busy tasks of needlework, whilst the rest disported themselves among the croquet-hoops.

"Oh, Eve," says Die again, presently, "I wish we women could make money. Why must it always be the men who do all the great work in the world, and get all the pay?"

"I don't know," says Eve; "still I think we are of some use, Die, slow work as it is. When we do all the needlework of the house, and make our old dresses look as well as new—(I'm sure those grays are most satisfactory)—we certainly save a great deal. Don't you remember the milliner's bills that used to come in at Horwood? and the dress-maker always in the house?"

"Yes," responds Die, more cheerfully, "certainly we are of some use. But it doesn't seem to go far *enough*, Eve—we are so many, you see."

There is something very interesting to me in this new type of woman, as seen in Die, so fair and delicate. My standard of feminine perfection has been Amy Marchmont, (the name comes less coyly than it used to my pen). But these simple, innocent-minded creatures, occupied with their unselfish cares and thoughts for others, are quite a different creation to that bold, brilliant beauty, living for admiration and for self-exaltation. Yes, Amy Marchmont, with her fashionable airs and graces, with her flashing jewels and her sparkling wit, and Die Travers with her sweet, winning simplicity, are as different as the glare of noonday sunshine on the Parade of St. Sebastian is to the calm beauty of moonlight bathing the rippling waves below it.

I am getting sentimental, by Jove!—*poetical* almost. See the result of three weeks' solitude in a sea-side lodging!