

hosts an elaborate dinner party in her husband's absence; she rents and moves into a small house of her own; and she has taken a lover. Similarly, it is hard to appreciate the significance of "for the first time in her life she stood naked in the open air," without a picture of what the bathing costume Edna has just cast aside would have been like.<sup>4</sup> More broadly, two examples of white southern chauvinism, the essays by Mary L. Shaffter and Wilbur Fisk Tillett, give glimpses of the ways class and race constructed gender in the period. The advice columns of Dorothy Dix and the social theory of Charlotte Perkins Stetson (Gilman) and Thorstein Veblen demonstrate that in her day Kate Chopin was not the only one challenging the prevailing gender ideology of the period.

## An Etiquette/Advice Book Sampler

### *Duties of the Wife*<sup>1</sup>

On the wife especially devolves the privilege and pleasure of rendering home happy. We shall, therefore, speak of such duties and observances as pertain to her. \* \* \*

### *Avoid All Causes for Complaint*

Never let your husband have cause to complain that you are more agreeable abroad than at home; nor permit him to see in you an object of admiration as respects your dress and manners, when in company, while you are negligent of both in the domestic circle. Many an unhappy marriage has been occasioned by neglect in these particulars. Nothing can be more senseless than the conduct of a young woman, who seeks to be admired in general society for her politeness and engaging manners, or skill in music, when, at the same time, she makes no effort to render her home attractive; and yet that home whether a palace or a cottage, is the very centre of her being—the nucleus around which her affections should revolve, and beyond which she has comparatively small concern.

### *Beware of Confidants*

Beware of intrusting any individual whatever with small annoyances, or misunderstandings, between your husband and yourself, if they unhappily occur. Confidants are dangerous persons, and many seek to obtain an ascendancy in families by gaining the good opinion of young married women. Be on your guard, and reject every overture that may lead to undesirable intimacy. Should any one presume to offer you

4. See below, pp. 135–36.

1. From Richard A. Wells, *Decorum: A Practical Treatise on Etiquette and Dress of the Best American Society* (New York: Union Publishing House, 1886) 248–49. Etiquette books of the period often appeared in numerous editions, and identical text may appear in books with different titles and even different authors.

advice with regard to your husband, or seek to lessen him by insinuations, shun that person as you would a serpent. \* \* \*

### *Influence of Mothers*<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \* What the child needs pre-eminently above playthings, books, clothes, and every other earthly thing, is *the presence and influence of mother*. No other woman in the world can take her place. Many mothers farm their children out to nurses, and then give themselves to household duties, social pleasures, or possibly to duties which may be important in themselves, but which, after all, can only be secondary to the discharge of the all-important duties of motherhood.

Many otherwise excellent women find the nursery a prison, and the care of their own children irksome, simply because they have a perverted mother-sense. The mother should have proper relief from the care of her children, but if she has the true mother-heart the companionship of her children will be the society which she will prefer above that of all others.

### *Reception Days*<sup>3</sup>

Let nothing, but the most imperative duty, call you out upon your reception day. Your callers are, in a measure, invited guests, and it will be an insulting mark of rudeness to be out when they call. Neither can you be excused, except in case of sickness.

Having appointed the day when you will be at home to see your friends, you must, for that day, prepare to give your time wholly to them. The usual hours for morning receptions are from twelve to three, and you should be dressed, and ready for callers, at least half an hour before that time.

### *Rules for Summer Resorts*<sup>4</sup>

At places of summer resort, those who own their cottages, call first upon those who rent them, and those who rent, in turn, call upon each other, according to priority of arrival. In all these cases there are exceptions; as, where there is any great difference in ages, the younger then calling upon the older, if there has been a previous acquaintance or exchange of calls. If there has been no previous acquaintance or exchange of calls, the older lady pays the first call, unless she takes the initiative by inviting the younger to call upon her, or by sending her an

2. From Sylvanus Stall, *What A Young Husband Ought to Know* (Philadelphia: Vir Publishing, 1897) 293.

3. From Florence Hartley, *The Ladies Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness* (Philadelphia: Evans, 1860) 76–77.

4. From John H. Young, *Our Department, Or the Manners, Conduct and Dress of the Most Refined Society* (Springfield, MA, 1882) 56.

invitation to some entertainment, which she is about to give. When the occupants of two villas, who have arrived the same season, meet at the house of a common friend, and the older of the two uses her privilege of inviting the other to call, it would be a positive rudeness not to call; and the sooner the call is made, the more civil will it be considered. It is equally rude, when one lady asks permission of another to bring a friend to call, and then neglects to do it, after permission has been given. If the acquaintance is not desired, the first call can be the last.

#### *Flirtation and Increasing Fastness of Manner*<sup>5</sup>

Flirtation is more openly indulged in by married women, even those who are old enough to have grown-up daughters, than ever before, and *fastness of manner* is certainly rapidly on the increase.

\* \* \* we may not be surprised to see the woman of fifty assuming the graces of sixteen, and occupying the corridors and piazzas of watering-place hotels with feeble attendant swains. It is a melancholy spectacle to those who desire to respect or love the woman, particularly to her sons and daughters. But her end is gained if somebody says: "Oh, Mrs. Feathercap is such a very fascinating woman to gentlemen!" She dresses, poses, and lives painfully, to reach this goal, and becomes the worst model for her young countrywomen to follow.

Flirtation among the young is forgiven, because it is very like the best and noblest event of human life—a true and honest love affair. It is a very good artificial rose—very like a real one; therefore we prefer it. Youth and high spirits being good things to have, we forgive their excesses and pardon their follies. There is no doubt that a coquettish and flirtatious girl, however, although she may become very fashionable, the reigning belle and the *toast*, is dangerously periling her chances for a good marriage by her habits of freebootery. No man cares to marry a free lance. Let her catch her fish, land him safely, and then, as a young married woman, let her go in and win as a married flirt. She will gain a fashionable position and a detestable reputation.

#### *Musicales*<sup>6</sup>

The character of the music and the length of the programme are decided upon by the lady giving the musicale, and it is supposed that a cultivated knowledge of music and some consideration for the known tastes of her guests govern this part of the preparations. Classical selections receive positions of honor in the list, but lighter melodies should not be ostracized altogether, as even in an audience selected for its profound music-lore there are sure to be some who will appreciate a

5. From *The American Code of Manners: a Study of the Usages, Laws and Observances which govern Intercourse in the Best Social Circles* . . . (New York: Andrews, 1880) 194, 196-97.

6. From [Eliza Lavin], *Good Manners*, 3rd ed. (New York: Butterick Publishing Company, 1889) 229.

ballad or a popular instrumental piece which suggests heroic reminiscences. The opening selection is usually instrumental, and the performer has quite as much right to expect respectful silence during instrumental as vocal music. It is downright rudeness to withhold it. A fashionable musicale may be given with only the piano for instrumental music and with a soprano and tenor of exceptional note for vocalists, an accompanist being also provided; but very often the piano is reinforced by the violin, a mandolin quartette is included, the singers number four or more, and solos, trios and duets vary the programme.

#### *The Street Manners of a Lady*<sup>7</sup>

The true lady walks the street, wrapped in a mantle of proper reserve, so impenetrable that insult and coarse familiarity shrink from her, while she, at the same time, carries with her a congenial atmosphere which attracts all, and puts all at their ease.

A lady walks quietly through the streets, seeing and hearing nothing that she ought not to see and hear, recognizing acquaintances with a courteous bow, and friends with words of greeting: She is always unobtrusive, never talks loudly, or laughs boisterously, or does anything to attract the attention of the passers-by. She walks along in her own quiet, lady-like way, and by her pre-occupation is secure from any annoyance to which a person of less perfect breeding might be subjected.

#### *Places of Amusement*<sup>8</sup>

Do not accept an invitation to visit any place of public amusement, with a gentleman with whom you are but slightly acquainted, unless there is another lady also invited. You may, as a young lady, go with a relative or your fiancée, without a chaperon, but not otherwise.

#### *Formal Dinner Parties*<sup>9</sup>

It is needless to say to aspirants for social honors, who really wish to "entertain," that dinner-giving is a serious expense, and entails all sorts of obligations upon the embarkers in such an enterprise. \* \* \*

Suppose you start with a dinner of eight, which is the most comfortable, genial—and expensive—number. You have a moderate-sized dining-room, and a large acquaintance. You are happy in the possession of a reliable cook, and a fair table-waitress. If the latter has a head, and table-sense, she may be able to wait on eight, but certainly not, of course, if you have champagne. That requires an expert's whole time. Let us suppose you do not have champagne, and that your one woman

7. Young 145-46.

8. Hartley 172.

9. From *Etiquette for Americans by a Woman of Fashion* (Chicago: Herbert S. Stone, 1898) 74-79, 85.

is expected to take entire care of the guests. They are formal, consisting of two august couples, middle-aged; an engaged pair, youthful; besides yourselves. Your *menu* is by no means the greatest care. You write that out, and give it to your cook. It consists of caviare sandwiches and vermouthe cocktails; oysters and sherry; lobster cutlets and sauterne; mushrooms on toast, claret for the ladies, Scotch whisky and aerated water of some kind for the men—these two kept up through the dinner; joint with two or three vegetables; salad and game, biscuits and perhaps a compote next; a pudding, hot or cold; fruit, cheese and coffee. Sweets must be on the table, and condiments, olives, etc. Flowers may be omitted (but never are) if you have a handsome dish of fruit, candelabra, and plenty of small things about. But the dishes mentioned are the fewest possible at a formal first dinner.

\* \* \* After dinner come liqueurs, carefully prepared with pounded ice; coffee in the drawing-room, cigarettes and lights for the men; and half an hour after dinner, aerated water again, for there is an almost inevitable after-dinner-party thirst. \* \* \*

Dinners of ten, twelve and fourteen cannot be managed without three, four and six servants, in any sort of order, and are absolutely forbidden to any but the well-to-do. \* \* \*

Your husband must be near you; for although the dinner is the hostess' affair, the invitations are given out in the names of both; and only a very informal dinner permits him to be absent.

### *Dress to Suit the Occasion<sup>1</sup>*

The dress should always be adapted to the occasion. Nothing is more proper for the morning than a loosely made dress, high in the neck, with sleeves fastened at the wrist with a band, and belt. It looks well, and is convenient. For a walking dress, the skirt should be allowed only just to touch the ground; for while a train looks well in the drawing-room, and is inconspicuous in a carriage or opera-box, it serves a very ignoble purpose in sweeping the street. Ladies' shoes for walking should be substantial, to keep the feet dry and warm. If neatly made and well fitted, they need not be clumsy.

Hats are now fashionable for morning walks, and they are both pretty and convenient.

### *Dress for Receiving Calls<sup>2</sup>*

If a lady has a special day for the reception of calls, her dress must be of silk, or other goods suitable to the season, or to her position, but

1. Wells 327.

2. Young 327-28, 326.

must be of quiet colors and plainly worn. Lace collars and cuffs should be worn with this dress, and a certain amount of jewelry is also admissible. A lady whose mornings are devoted to the superintendence of her domestic affairs, may receive a casual caller in her ordinary morning dress, which must be neat, yet plain, with white plain linen collars and cuffs. For New Year's, or other calls of special significance, the dress should be rich, and may be elaborately trimmed. If the parlors are closed and the gas lighted, full evening dress is required.

### *Carriage Dress*

The material for a dress for a drive through the public streets of a city, or along a fashionable drive or park, cannot be too rich. Silks, velvets and laces, are all appropriate, with rich jewelry and costly furs in cold weather. If the fashion require it, the carriage dress may be long enough to trail, or it may be of the length of a walking dress, which many prefer. For driving in the country, a different style of dress is required, as the dust and mud would soil rich material.

### *The Full Dinner Dress*

The full dinner dress for guests admits of great splendor. It may be of any thick texture of silk or velvet for winter, or light rich goods for summer, and should be long and sweeping. Every trifle in a lady's costume should be, as far as she can afford it, faultless. The fan should be perfect in its way, and the gloves should be quite fresh. Diamonds are used in broaches, pendants, ear-rings and bracelets. If artificial flowers are worn in the hair, they should be of the choicest description. All the light neutral tints, and black, dark blue, purple, dark green, garnet, brown and fawn are suited for dinner wear.

### *Costumes for Country and Sea-side<sup>3</sup>*

We cannot give a full description of the wardrobe which the lady of fashion desires to take with her to the country or sea-side. But there are a few general rules which apply to many things, and which all must more or less observe. Let the wardrobe be ever so large there must be a certain number of costumes suited for ordinary wear. Thus, dresses, while they may be somewhat brighter in tint than good taste would justify in the streets of a city, must yet be durable in quality and of material which can be washed. The brim of the hat should be broad to protect the face from the sun. The fashion of making hats of shirred muslin is a very sensible one, as it enables them to be done up when

3. Wells 341.

they are soiled. The boots should be strong and durable. A waterproof is an indispensable article to the sojourner at country resorts.

### *Bathing Dresses<sup>4</sup>*

The problem of bathing dresses is always one that is rather perplexing, for while, in a general way, the style does not change, there are always little points of difference from year to year.

There is no longer any question about the length of a skirt or of the trousers that are worn, for it is now some years since the law went forth that it was not necessary to wear long ungainly trousers fastened in at the ankles and skirts as scant as possible, so that a jaunty smart effect is perfectly possible, even in the plainest of dresses. Most women know how to swim, or are learning to, so that also has to be considered, for their dress must then be made to allow as much freedom of the limbs as possible, and there must be nothing to hamper the circulation in any way.

The material which stays in favor the longest for bathing dresses is serge. There have been a great many innovations of late years, and other materials are extensively used; but serge seems to be the prime favorite. A rough heavy serge, that does not retain the moisture, will wear well for two or three seasons without losing its color or shrinking. It is not well to buy too expensive a one, for it does not seem to wear as well as the coarser varieties, and the fine twill is never as effective.

The best way to make up a bathing suit is with full short trousers or knickerbockers gartered above the knee, and a short skirt made with gored front breadth, a little fulness over the hips, and considerable fulness in the back. This skirt should be finished with a deep hem, and the seams should be stitched with silk, for even the best cotton loses its color quickly in salt water, and the suit will look shabby long before the material shows the slightest sign of wear. The waist must be made to have the appearance of fit—the back with a little fulness drawn in under the belt; the front slightly bloused, cut in sailor-blouse fashion with wide open revers;<sup>5</sup> sleeves, short puffs reaching only half-way down the arm, this to give full play to the arms when swimming. As many stout women object to the full knickerbockers, it is quite possible to have them made with only sufficient fulness to prevent their drawing tightly over the leg. One design has the waist and trousers all in one piece, and then the skirt buttoned on at the waist line under the belt. The other plan is to have the waist and the skirt in one piece, and the trousers separate.

Mohair is another favorite material for bathing suits. It sheds the water quite as well as serge, and when wet has a silky look that is attractive. There is no difference in the style for the different materials, but there

4. From "New York Fashions," *Harper's Bazar* 25 June 1898: 551.

5. Part of a garment folded over to show the inside, as a lapel [*Editor*].

is a great deal of difference in the way in which the waists are trimmed. The revers are faced with some bright color, and there are a sailor collar and belt which match the revers. These can be made of blue, red, black, or white, and trimmed with bands of braid or left plain. The different kinds of duck are used to face them, as is also turkey-red cotton, and on many expensive ones silk is used, and silk does retain its color marvellously.

Of course where the blouse opens at the throat there must needs be a piece shaped like a vest buttoned underneath, exactly on the plan of the children's sailor suits. These vest pieces are made to match the revers and other trimmings. They must be cut well up in the neck, for, although at the fashionable watering-places last year bathing suits were worn open a little at the throat, it is never good style, and lacks a certain smartness that a trim high-cut waist always possesses.

Many of the mohair skirts are trimmed with bands of some bright color. Black is more used for the body material than anything else, although there are many made of red. The disadvantage of red is that it loses its bright color very quickly. White mohair suits are often seen, but must always be made of the heaviest qualities, for white is too transparent to be modest. It is very pretty, particularly when the trimmings are effective.

Some of the most effective bathing suits seen this year are made of ticking or canvas cloth. This material has its excellent points, and also its very objectionable ones. Its good points are that it sheds the water well, and also retains its stiffness, and of course does not cling to the figure as the others sometimes do. When thoroughly wet it will look just as smart as when it was perfectly dry. It comes in the different stripes we have always been accustomed to see, and can be made more effective by trimmings of bright red, bright blue, or white.

Silk bathing dresses are a little conspicuous, and hardly in good style. They shed the water well, but require a great deal of trimming, and then look overdone and not quite appropriate. Black silk and dark blue silk are the only possible colors, and these are made and trimmed just like the others that have been described.

Mohair, silk, ticking, and all other materials, excepting serge and flannel, require to have the yoke lined with a light flannel, as they are otherwise quite too cool.

What to wear on the head and on the feet is a most important question in a bathing costume. Excepting on rocky beaches, shoes are not worn. Bathing stockings must be long enough to garter well above the knee, and must have good stout soles. As the bathing skirts are all short, the stockings are very much in evidence, and require to be a good shape and well fitted.

There are many different kinds of fancy bathing stockings, but it is

not always well to buy them. A heavy ribbed silk, while expensive to start with, wears so well, that the expense is worth while. As a rule black stockings are worn, but some women like to have them match the trimming on their suits. It looks gayer, and is certainly more conspicuous.

Very few embroidered stockings are worn. Some few have clocks, which are supposed to be becoming and make the ankle look more slender. The ribbed ones, however, are the most becoming and the most suitable.

There are many different opinions as to whether salt water is good for the hair or not. It is certainly not pleasant to have long hair soaked in sea-water every other day, or every day, as the case may be; consequently women who are particular wear a rubber cap, and over this a bright handkerchief tied in turban fashion, with the ends in front sticking up very smartly and becomingly. Women who do not wet their hair while bathing have it arranged as high and quite as elaborately as if they were going out to dinner.

The old-fashioned big straw hat tied down over the ears is no longer seen, but there are some smaller bathing hats very much on the same plan, and these prevent the terrible tanning which is part of the sea-bath, and which cannot be anything but injurious to a delicate skin. A bow of bright turkey-red, or flowers that will resist wind, water, and sun, are put on these hats.

## Fashion Plates from *Harper's Bazar*



Demi-saison gowns from Félix. August 20, 1898.