

Third of the Prize-Winning Essays on Harmonious Dress

Miss Petronella Smith Was the Winner of Third Prize in the Essay-Writing Competition Conducted by the South Porcupine Home and School Association. This Essay Cleverly Written and Taking up Subject in Original Way.

Herewith is published the essay written by Miss Petronella Smith in the competition recently conducted by the South Porcupine Home and School Association. This essay was the winner of third prize. The first and second prize essays have been published in the previous issues of The Advance. Like the other two prize-winners, the third prize essay shows originality of thought, capable literary talent and striking thoughtfulness. Miss Smith has handled the subject in very effective way. The following is the essay.

The word "harmony" means "accord," or "unity." To wear colours in harmony with each other means to wear colours that blend, or unite to form a whole pleasing to the eye. To dress in harmony with an occasion means to dress fittingly for the occasion. For example, do not wear a dance frock on the street, or a school frock to a dance. They would NOT be in harmony with the occasion.

In dressing harmoniously, it is necessary for a young girl to keep two things in mind; to wear colours that are in harmony with the occasion. When in school, a girl should not dress as though she were ready for a party, and, of course, vice versa.

Most girls have an adequate sense of colour, and know whether or not the colours they are wearing are at "peace" or at "war." Unfortunately, though, there is always the girl who gives the rest of her associates the impression that she is either colour-blind, or has no sense whatever

of the true blending of colours.

Dress is the medium through which a person expresses his or her personality. And dress always has a great deal to do with a person's emotions. On the death of some near relation, black is usually worn, because it does not jar the thought of the person wearing it; also, as a sign of respect for the dead. One cannot help but be sober when in dark, solemn, colours. If a young girl feels elated over something, she puts on some brightly-coloured dress. Also, our style of dressing betrays our personality. Some people dress very elaborately on every occasion, while others, knowing the fitness of things, do not.

Then, again, there are the different types of girls to consider. Whether dark, or fair; tall or short; stout, or, as the school-girl is generally called by her comrades, "skinny"; each girl has to decide for herself what colours suit her, and use them accordingly. A tall girl can afford a little elaboration on her dresses, but not much, since plain lines emphasize her height, and frills and ruffles detract from it. Straight lines are THE things a short girl should look for in a dress. They give one the appearance of being taller, which is what most short girls want. The stout girl should also wear straight lines and wear her dresses not too short. A short, frilly dress on a stout girl always reminds me of a barrel. As well as emphasizing height, straight lines make one appear thinner. Then

comes the poor "skinny" girl. She seems to be out of luck all around. If she wears a low necked dress, her bony neck shows. If she wears short sleeves, her bony elbows stick out. Her clothes hang on her like a scarecrow, and, her feet always appear extra large. About the only way to remedy these inconveniences is to wear dresses with long sleeves and a fairly high on tight neck. A middy suits a thin girl, because, whether thin or not, it gives the impression that a medium-sized person is underneath it.

When a dress of heavy material is worn, heavy stockings should be worn also. Silk stockings would look out of place. Similarly with a light dress, wear light stockings of cotton, lisle, or if one can afford them, silk. To go to a party in a silk dress, and wear heavy woolen stockings would be the height of absurdity, and silk stockings are really what should be worn in that case. In fact, a silk dress and heavy stockings look no more absurd than a heavy dress, and silk stockings.

Plain dresses in preferably "quiet" colours are the best for school wear. It is absurd to wear elaborate dresses, or those made of goods which soil easily, to school. A dress that can stand hard wear, and yet looks respectable, is far more appropriate than one which is flimsy and over-elaborate. A good costume for school wear, is in the summer, to wear a middie and a skirt; cotton, or light stockings of any material, in the summer, and heavy stockings in the winter. Some girls cannot afford to wear expensive clothes, or silk stockings to school, and those girls who can afford to dress so are apt to make the poorer girl feel dissatisfied, and in some cases, they even refuse to go to school unless they can "dress like So-and-So."

For the street, a young girl should wear dark, plain clothes, and shoes and stockings to match, or at least to blend. Light dresses are usually worn in the summer. Let the young

girl keep her frilled and fancy dresses for parties, or any such occasion which demands "fussing up." Some girls, though, bring up the plea that they never go to parties, and if they don't wear their clothes they will get to short. I would recommend a line from Tennyson's "Epic," in "Morte D'Arthur," "Keep a thing, its use will come."

Dark, plain clothes should be worn to church. Jewellery of any sort is absolutely out of place in church. Nowadays, the object in going to church seems to be to show off one's clothes. Showy clothes are apt to distract the preacher's thoughts, and what is far more probable, those of one's neighbours, from the sermon. They may envy the clothes but, what opinion do they derive as to the persons character?

One question which is foremost in most girls minds nowadays, is "What shall I wear for sport?" In the Victorian age sport was practically abolished among girls because their clothing hampered their movements, and it was considered exceedingly immodest if they wore anything giving the body a little freedom. Indirectly, then, clothes affect the health of a person, since sport of some kind is essential to the average person. People may throw up their hands in horror at the modern girl in her knickers, and perhaps they are doing right. A short, but not too short skirt worn over the knickers would certainly make the girl look more girlish, but what a proposition it is to put that into the modern girls head! As one "Ladies' Magazine" quotes, "We have found our freedom in modern clothes, and we intend to keep it." That, to use slang, "hits the nail on the head." Wear clothes that do not hamper the movements of the body, yet that keeps one warm. A good outfit is knickers, a short, fairly full skirt, a sweater, golf hose, oxfords, and a small light-fitting hat for the fall or winter. In the summer, light, but strongly made clothes, light shoes and stockings, and a small

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hat or not, as pleases the wearer.

The next problem is travelling. Something which does not show dust and grime is best, and thus a tweed suit is considered by many to be the travelling costume. There are three ways of travelling:—by automobile, by train, and ocean travelling. I will deal with them in turn. If long trips are to be taken by automobile, a tweed suit is, as I have already mentioned, the best costume, since one is bound to collect some dust. To wear a large, be-feathered or heavily ornamented hat would be entirely out of place when driving, for obvious reasons. A small tight-fitting hat is indispensable to one doing a great deal of driving. So much for automobile travelling. On the train, a suit which does not show the dust is best, and a small hat, which is sometimes removed. Grey shoes and stockings; or those of a hue which do not show the dust as black shoes do, are preferable. In short, clothes in which one looks as fresh after the journey as before starting. For ocean travel, a heavy coat and a tightly fitting hat are indispensable for the decks. The clothes worn in the dining salon and the drawing room should not be conspicuous, yet to fit the occasion.

Another problem is what clothes one is to wear while visiting. If just for an afternoon or evening visit, one thing only should be kept in mind. Dress quietly, but as much like the person whom one is visiting, as possible. If they cannot afford as expensive clothes as the visitor, she should not dress so as to make them feel even poorer than they are in contrast. If they are better able to afford clothes than the visitor, then dress as well as possible, and try not to seem "shabby" in contrast. A simple tailor made frock suits all visiting occasions, because it looks expensive, and, above all things, in good taste. When making a week-end or even longer visit, remember not to take along clothes that will outshine the hostess. But then, again try not to be appear "shabby." In this predicament, the one answer is simple, tailor made clothes.

Then comes perhaps the most difficult decision of all:—"What shall I wear to this or that dance?" Of course, the girl alone must choose her dress, but there are a few helpful rules even here. A dress of light material is preferable with silk stockings and good dancing shoes. To wear brogues or boots to a dance is done—in little out-of-the-way dances,—but at a formal dance, such a thing would be unheard of. Simple dance-frocks are best for the young girl, since she looks dressed for the occasion, but not over-dressed. A tall girl may decorate her dress with frills, but a short girl should not especially if she is in the least inclined to be stout. The taste for decoration may be exercised on dance frocks, but not to such an extent as to look as though every kind of ornament had been thrown on just because the wearer happened to fancy them. And also please DO get ornaments which fit the dress. For example, do not wear heavy ornaments designed for a velvet dress on a silk, satin, or taffeta one. If one is very, or even fairly short, too many ornaments should not be worn since they, in a way, detract from the height of the wearer. If one is dark, do not wear colours and designs of dresses obviously made for fair persons. And, above all, do not overdress nor wear too much jewellery. One or two good pieces of jewellery are far better than ever so many pieces of obviously cheap jewellery.

A very common mistake nowadays is for a girl to wear what she cannot afford. Some girls come from poor families; and yet dress as expensively as a girl from a much richer family. As a result, what do her friends think of her? Her one idea of life is clothes, and her own person. She does not care what her parents, and probably younger brothers go without so that she can appear smartly dressed. To appear well, and expensively dressed is all right when one can afford it, but does not a simple, inexpensive dress look better on a girl when everyone knows that that is all she cannot afford, than if she were to wear expensive clothes? One of the first questions asked would be:—"Where did she get the money for that dress?" Shadows of doubt cross their mind, and the girl is not received as hospitably as before. If she is working, her money can of

course, be all spent on herself, but that also is a selfish motive. Some girls gain happiness by seeing themselves dressed "to the minute," and the world thinks them selfish, while others would sooner see the rest of the family with better clothes, while not over-neglecting their own appearances. Happiness of spirit shows in our manner, and the girl who is cheerful, even though poorly dressed, is always more welcome than she who is expensively dressed, more than probably without any sense of taste, and whose thoughts are entirely self-centred. Being poorly dressed does not necessarily mean not dressed harmoniously. The girl who can afford but little usually uses good sense and judgment and gets those few things to harmonize, and of materials that will wear well.

A few words will sum up all that I have said. Dress in colours that blend, and in harmony with the occasion. Never dress over elaborately, and shun too much jewellery. A good motto is:—"Be inconspicuous, sensibly dressed to fit the occasion, and wear clothes fitting to ones age and station in life."

Your importance in this world is measured only by the service you can render.

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