

Faet and Fancy for Women.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

You may ride in the early morning,
You may ride in the dewy night,
You may ride till your eyes are red
All the star-eyes' light,
You may stay to the graceful motion
Of your sensitive, thoroughbred mare,
You may race with the winds and the moon—
But you can not outride Care.

You may ride with the grace of an angel,
With a heart and a soul on fire,
You may ride till your road swims beneath you,
Until you and your thoroughbred tire,
You may ride till your cheeks are like roses,
With the red, rich wine of the air,
You may ride till the night came to morning—
But you can not outride Care.

Miss Mabel Jennens will soon appear in Central park riding astride her horse like a man. She has already given an exhibition of her skill as a rider in a bifurcated skirt, at the West End Riding Academy, with a half dozen women and her riding master for an audience. Miss Jennens claims that the side-saddle is injurious, and that it develops only one-half of the body and causes lateral curvature of the spine.

All this is the sheerest nonsense, and, although "fads" are as necessary to the health of the average woman as are food and drink, it is to be hoped that sensible women will pay no more serious attention to this so-called "reform" than they did to Dr. Mary Walker's trousers. In the first place, riding is not injurious to the woman who knows how to ride and who does not bounce up and down on a horse like a rubber ball; on the contrary, it is the most healthful exercise a woman can take, and many a pale, languid city beauty has found health, appetite and roses in a daily canter along country lanes. For the woman whose body is already developed, there is no startling probability that she will become noticeably "one-sided" from daily use of the side-saddle during a natural lifetime; while for growing girls may be used a saddle with knee-guards on the right, as well as the left, side, so that a frequent change of position will check any tendency to curvature of the spine.

There is in the little town which is my home the most beautiful rider I have ever seen on a horse, and she has ridden ever since she could walk; yet her figure is straight, erect and symmetrical, and her carriage easy and graceful. I know another lady who for many years, during at least nine months in the year, has ridden twice daily—an hour in the morning and from three to four hours in the evening—and who frequently spends a whole day in the saddle; yet I find that she is evenly developed and her shoulders are level, her eyes are bright, her complexion is clear; and she has a little child which is the most perfect specimen of healthy, finely developed babyhood that I have ever seen. It is worthy of remark that this lady is of noticeably fine figure, and never wore an unconducibly tight corset in her life; comfortable clothing is as necessary to grace on horseback as it is to health, for the good rider never looks stiff or uneasy.

As for danger on horseback—the fear of which causes so many timid women to hold back when they are longing to ride—why, for the matter of that, it is dangerous to sit at your window and sew; you might be struck by lightning, you know, or some one might accidentally shoot you. If you go through life feeling afraid that this thing or that thing may befall you, you will make yourself, and every one about you, miserable.

By all means, ride. But do not ever mount a horse with a feeling of fear, because if you do he will know it instantly, and he will take advantage of your timidity and impose upon you more than a woman imposes upon the man who is very much in love with her—and that is saying a good deal, isn't it? He will watch you out of the corner of his eye, and he will know just how many pranks he may play upon you. Summon all your courage to your aid, and then mount your horse quietly, firmly—never hurriedly—and speak to him always as you would to a child, in a tone of gentle, but unfaltering, authority.

When you hear a woman say: "It is not fashionable now to ride," or "It is quite the style now to ride," or "Oh, it isn't stylish to canter now—the English trot is the thing," or "Ladies don't go in for riding in Washington," you may feel sure that she never knew what it was to ride—to feel her blood rush along her veins and her pulses thrill with exquisite pleasure; to know that she is cleaving the keen, sweet air on the back of a powerful animal that is held in control by the slightest motion of her delicate wrist; to feel her heart and her very soul keep time to the maddest gallop or the slowest canter; to neither know nor care whether she is alone or in company so long as she and her horse understand each other; to ride for health, happiness and the pure love of riding; and to not care whether she has a "steamed" hundred-dollar habit or a pretty five-dollar one so long as she is able to ride gracefully and modestly like a woman and not "bifurcatedly" like a man.

A gentleman who is well known as a "diner-out" in Washington society—an enviable (?) reputation, by the way—called upon Mrs. Morton, the vice-president's wife, a lady of good family and breeding, and who has enjoyed great wealth for the most part of her life, and found her in a gown of rich, dark velvet, buttoned to the throat and covering her arms to the wrist; the young women were in modest house dresses. Calling at another official's home, he found the blinds drawn, the gas blazing, and the hostess and the young girls who were her assistants on this occasion, were in full evening dress—low-cut and sleeveless. A senator's wife, with whom this gentleman discussed the subject afterward, agreed with him that this vulgar taste for décolleté gowns on every possible occasion was one of the crudest features of Washington society. Said she: "If a girl comes to spend the afternoon with me and meet my visitors in a low-necked gown, I never ask her again." This same lady, by the by, has conceived a pretty idea to give young girls who do not know better a delicate intimation that low-necked gowns in the afternoon are undesirable. She puts a little crepe shawl about the girl's bare shoulders, and says: "My dear, I am afraid you will catch cold in my chilly rooms; you must keep this as a souvenir of the day"—and the poor girl doesn't dare to take it off when it is given in this way.

It requires rather an extraordinarily nice mind, however, to decide just what is the difference between a low gown in the daylight and a low gown in the gaslight. Of course, if it is only a question of fashion, the line may easily be drawn; but, in my mind, it is a question of something deeper and far more sacred than this. It is true that to a pure mind and pure eyes there is nothing on this earth so beautiful, so pure, so formed to inspire admiration and reverence, as the nude feminine form—the white body that holds a white soul; and the man—or woman—who can not look at a nude picture or a bit of nude