CHAPTER VIII

JEWELRY AS DECORATION

The use of jewelry as colour and line has really nothing to do with its intrinsic worth. Just as when furnishing a house, one selects pictures for certain rooms with regard to their decorative quality alone, their colour with relation to the colour scheme of the room (The Art of Interior Decoration), so jewels should be selected either to complete costumes, or to give the keynote upon which a costume is built. A woman whose artist-dressmaker turns out for her a marvellous green gown, would far better carry out the colour scheme with some semi-precious stones than insist upon wearing her priceless rubies.

On the other hand, granted one owns rubies and they are becoming, then plan a gown entirely with reference to them, noting not merely the shade of their colour, but the character of their setting, should it be distinctive.
JEWELRY AS DECORATION

One of the most picturesque public events in Vienna each year, is a bazaar held for the benefit of a charity under court patronage. To draw the crowds and induce them to give up their money, it has always been the custom to advertise widely that the ladies of the Austro-Hungarian court would conduct the sale of articles at the various booths and that the said noble ladies would wear their family jewels. Also, that there be no danger of confusing the various celebrities, the names of those selling at each booth would be posted in plain lettering over it. Programmes are sold, which also inform patrons as to the name and station of each lovely vendor of flowers and sweets. It is an extraordinary occasion, and well worth witnessing once. The jewels worn are as amazing and fascinating as is Hungarian music. There is a barbaric sumptuousness about them, an elemental quality conveyed by the Oriental combining of stones, which to the western European and American, seem incongruous. Enormous pearls, regular and irregular, are set together in company with huge sapphires, emeralds, rubies and diamonds, cut in the antique way. Looking
about, one feels in an Arabian Nights’ dream. On the particular occasion to which we refer, the most beautiful woman present was the Princess Metternich, and in her jewels decorative as any woman ever seen.

The women of the Austrian court, especially the Hungarian women, are notably beautiful and fascinating as well. It is the Magyar élan, that abandon which prompts a woman to toss her jewelled bangle to a Gypsy leader of the orchestra, when his violin moans and flashes out a czardas.

But the rule remains the same whether your jewels are inherited and rich in souvenirs of European courts, or the last work of Cartier. They must be a harmonious part of a carefully designed costume, or used with discretion against a background of costumes planned with reference to making them count as the sole decoration.

We recall a Spanish beauty, representative of several noble strains, who was an artist in the combining of her gems as to their class and colour. Hers was that rare gift,—infallible good taste, which led her to contribute an individual
PLATE XI
MARIE ANTOINETTE IN A PORTRAIT BY MADAME VIGÈE LE BRUN, one of the greatest portrait painters of the eighteenth century. Here we see the lovely queen of Louis XVI in the type of costume she made her own which is still referred to as the Marie Antoinette style.

This portrait is in the Musée National, Versailles.
Bourbon France
Marie Antoinette Portrait
by Madame Vigée Le Brun
quality to her temporary possessions. She counted in Madrid, not only as a beautiful and brilliant woman, but as a decorative contribution to any room she entered. It was not uncommon to meet her at dinner, wearing some very chic blue gown, often of velvet, the sole decoration of which would be her sapphires, stones rare in themselves, famous for their colour, their matching, the manner in which they were cut, and their setting,—the unique handwork of some goldsmith of genius. It is impossible to forget her distinguished appearance as she entered the room in a princess gown, made to show the outline of her faultless figure, and cut very low. Against the background of her white neck and the simple lines of her blue gown, the sapphires became decoration with artistic restraint, though they gleamed from a coronet in her soft, black hair, encircled her neck many times and fell below her waist line, clasped her arms and were suspended from her ears in long, graceful pendants. They adorned her fingers and they composed a girdle of indescribable beauty.

Later, the same night, one would meet this
woman at a ball, and discover that she had made a complete change of costume and was as elegant as before, but now all in red, a gown of deep red velvet or some wonderful soft satin, unadorned save by her rubies, as numerous and as unique as her sapphires had been.

There were other women in Madrid wearing wonderful jewels, one of them when going to court functions always had a carriage follow hers, in which were detectives. How strange this seems to Americans! But this particular woman in no way illustrated the point we would make, for she had lost control of her own lines, had no knowledge of line and colour in costume, and when wearing her jewels, looked very much like the show case of a jeweller's shop.

Jewelry must be worn to make lines, continue or terminate lines, accentuate a good physical point, or hide a bad one. Remember that a jewel like any other object d'art, is an ornament, and unless it is ornamental, and an added attraction to the wearer, it is valueless in a decorative way. For this reason it is well to discover, by experimenting, what jewelry is your affair, what kind of rings for example, are best suited
to your kind of hands. It may be that small rings of delicate workmanship, set with colourless gems, will suit your hands; while your friend will look better in the larger, heavier sort, set with stones of deeper tones.

This finding out what one can and cannot wear, from shoe leather to a feather in the hat (and the inventory includes even width of hem on a linen handkerchief), is by no means a frivolous, fruitless waste of time; it is a wise preparedness, which in the end saves time, vitality and money. And if it does not make one independent of expert advice (and why should one expect to be that, since technique in any art should improve with practice?) it certainly prepares one to grasp and make use of, expert suggestions.

We have often been told, and by those whose business it is to know such things, that the models created by great Paris dressmakers are not always flashes of genius which come in the night, nor the wilful perversion of an existing fashion, to force the world of women into discarding, and buying everything new. It may look suspiciously like it when we see a mere swing of
the pendulum carrying the straight sheath out to the ten-yard limit of crinoline skirts.

As a matter of fact, decorative woman rules the fashions, and if decorative woman makes up her mind to retain a line or a limit, she does it. The open secret is that every great Paris house has its chic clientele, which in returning from the Riviera—Europe’s Peacock Alley—is full of knowledge as to how the last fashions (line and colour), succeeded in scoring in the rôle designated. Those points found to be desirable, becoming, beautiful, comfortable, appropriate, *seduisant*—what you will—are taken as the foundation of the next wardrobe order, and with this inside information from women who *know* (know the subtle distinction between daring lines and colours, which are *good form*, and those which are not), the men or women who give their lives to creating costumes proceed to build. These are the fashions for the exclusive few this year, for the whole world the next year.

In conclusion, to reduce one of the rules as to how jewels should be worn to its simplest form, never use imitation pearl trimming if you are
wearing a necklace and other ornaments of real pearls. The pearl trimming may be very charming in itself, but it lessens the distinction of your real pearls.

In the same way rhinestones may be decidedly decorative, but only a woman with an artist's instinct can use her diamonds at the same time. It can be done, by keeping the rhinestones off the bodice. An artist can conceive and work out a perfect adjustment of what in the mind and hand of the inexperienced is not to be attempted. Your French dressmaker combines real and imitation laces in a fascinating manner. That same artist's instinct could trim a gown with emerald pastes and hang real gems of the same in the ears, using brooch and chain, but you would find the green glass garniture swept from the proximity of the gems and used in some telling manner to score as trimming,—not to compete as jewels. We have seen the skirt of French gowns of black tulle or net, caught up with great rhinestone swans, and at the same time a diamond chain and diamond earrings worn. Nothing could have been more chic.

We recall another case of the discreet com-
bining of gems and paste. It was at the Spring races, Longchamps, Paris. The decorative woman we have never forgotten, had marvellous gold-red hair, wore a costume of golden brown chiffon, a close toque (to show her hair) of brown; long topaz drops hung from her ears, set in hand-wrought Etruscan gold, and her shell lorgnettes hung from a topaz chain. Now note that on her toque and her girdle were buckles made of topaz glass, obviously not real topaz and because made to look like milliner’s garniture and not jeweler’s work, they had great style and were as beautiful of their kind as the real stones.
PLATE XII
The portrait of an Englishwoman painted during the Napoleonic period.

She wears the typical Empire gown, cloak, and bonnet. The original of this portrait is the same referred to elsewhere as having moistened her muslin gowns to make them cling to her, in Grecian folds.

Among her admiring friends was Lord Byron.

A descendant who allows the use of the charming portrait, explains that the fair lady insisted upon being painted in her bonnet because her curling locks were short—a result of typhoid fever.