CHAPTER X

WOMAN DECORATIVE IN HER SUN-ROOM

SUN-ROOM as the name implies, is a room planned to admit as much sun as is possible. An easy way to get the greatest amount of light and sun is to enclose a steam heated porch with glass which may be removed at will. Sometimes part of a conservatory is turned into a sun-room, awnings, rugs, chairs, tables, couches, making it a fascinating lounge or breakfast room, useful, too, at the tea hour. Often when building a house a room on the sunny side is given one, two, or three glass sides. To trick the senses, ferns and flowering plants, birds and fountains are used as decorations, suggesting out-of-doors.

The woman who would add to the charm of her sun-room in Winter by keeping up the illusion of Summer, will wear Summer clothes when in it, that is, the same gowns, hats and foot-wear which she would select for a warm climate. To
Portrait by Gilbert Stuart of Doña Matilda, Stoughton de Jaudenes. (Metropolitan Museum.)

We use this portrait to illustrate the period when woman's line was obliterated by the excessive decoration of her costume.

The interest attached to this charming example of her time lies in colour and detail. It is as if the bewitching Doña Matilda were holding up her clothes with her person. Her outline is that of a ruffled canary. How difficult for her to forget her material trappings, when they are so many, and yet she looks light of heart.

For sharp contrast we suggest that our reader turn at once to the portrait by Sargent (Plate XV) which is distinguished for its clean-cut outline and also the distinction arrived at through elimination of detail in the way of trimming. The costume hangs on the woman, suspended by jewelled chains from her shoulders.

The Sargent has the simplicity of the Classic Greek; the Gilbert Stuart portrait, the amusing fascination of Marie Antoinette detail.

The gown is white satin, with small gold flowers scattered over its surface. The head-dress surmounting the powdered hair is of white satin with seed-pearl ornaments.

The background is a dead-rose velvet curtain, draped to show blue sky, veiled by clouds. The same dead-rose on table and chair covering. The book on table has a softly toned calf cover. Gilbert Stuart was fond of working in this particular colour note.
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Eighteenth Century Costume Portrait by Gilbert Stewart
be exquisite, if you are young or youngish, well and active, you would naturally appear in the sun-room after eleven, in some sheer material of a delicate tint, made walking length, with any graceful Summer hat which is becoming, and either harmonises with colour of gown or is an agreeable contrast to it. By graceful hat we mean a hat suggesting repose, not the close, tailored hat of action. One woman we know always uses her last Summer's muslins and wash silks, shoes, slippers and hats in her sun-room during the Winter. In her wardrobe there are invariably a lot of sheer muslins, voiles and wash silks in white, mauve, greys, pinks, or delicate stripes, the outline following the fashion, voluminous, straight or clinging, the bodice tight with trimmings inset or full, beruffled, or kerchiefed. Her hats are always entirely black or entirely white, in type the variety we know as picturesque, made very light in weight and with no thought of withstanding the elements. The woman who knows how, can get the effect of a picture hat with very little outlay of money. It is a matter of line when on the head, that look of lightness and general airiness which
gives one the feeling that the wearer has just blown in from the lawn! The artist's hand can place a few simple loops of ribbon on a hat, and have success, while a stupid arrangement of costly feathers or flowers may result in failure. The effect of movement got by certain line manipulation, suggesting arrested motion, is of inestimable value, especially when your hat is one with any considerable width of brim. The hat with movement is like a free-hand sketch, a hat without movement like a decalcomania.

If the owner of the sun-room is resting or invalided then away with out-of-door costume. For her a tea-gown and satin slippers are in order, as they would be under similar conditions on her furnished porch.

If the mistress of the sun-room is young and athletic, one who never goes in for frou-frous, but wears linen skirts and blouses when pouring tea for her friends, let her be true to her type in the sun-room, but always emphasising immaculate daintiness, rather than the ready-for-sport note. A sheer blouse and French heels on white pumps will transpose the plain linen skirt into the key of picturesque relaxation, the hall-mark
of sun-rooms. More than any other room in the house, the sun-room is for drifting. One cannot imagine writing a cheque there, or going over one's monthly accounts.

We assume that the colour scheme in the sun-room was dictated by the owner and is therefore sympathetic to her. If this be true, we can go farther and assume that the delicate tones of her porch gowns and tea gowns will harmonise. If her sun-room is done in yellows and orange and greens, nothing will look better than cream-white as a costume. If the walls, woodwork and furniture have been kept very light in tone, relying on the rugs and cushions and dark foliage of plants to give character, then a costume of sheer material in any one of the decided colours in the chintz cushions, will be a welcome contribution to the decoration of the sun-room. Additional effect can be given a costume by the clever choice of colour and line in a work-bag.