XXXVI

FURTHER EFFECTS OF CLOTHES ON THE INDIVIDUAL

MENTAL EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT CLOTHES—PREFERENCES OF GIRLS FOR CERTAIN ARTICLES OF DRESS—MOVEMENTS THAT DEPEND UPON THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF CLOTHES

PUTTING on one side the special points of detri-
ment which clothes bring about with regard to the body, we may turn to more general effects. Our language is full of proverbial sayings as to the way in which clothes may give beauty, and also as to how much we owe to fine feathers and to our tailors. Quite apart from the results which clothes have upon other people, there are the mental effects which are produced on ourselves. That it is not, perhaps, com-
fort or discomfort altogether which causes our body to react on the mind, is shown by the results of some investigations made by Dr. Louis W. Flaccus among the schoolgirls of New York.59

Feelings of lightheartedness are the result of filmy clothes, and one girl of eighteen said that whenever she had on a garment of this consistency she always wanted to dance. The pleasant mental effects of gauzy stuffs and laces are said by the
investigator to be due not only to their lightness, but to the mental associations with which they are connected. Such dresses as those which we have mentioned suggest some gay social function. Again, just as the putting on of a smoking jacket suggests relaxation to a man, so does the assuming of evening dress impart the idea that correct behaviour is necessary. Heavy clothes bring about mental depression.

"In a large, heavy hat my spirits are low," says one of the girls who were interrogated, and Dr. Flaccus claims that the mood may change with the hat, while that he has evidence to go upon will be seen from the following answers: "A broad hat makes me feel jolly"; "If my hat is flat on my forehead, I feel depressed"; "If I have a fancy hat on, I am in a coquettish mood"; or again, "I feel brighter in a hat that rolls away from my face." Then the effect which certain surfaces have upon various persons has to be taken into consideration when dealing with this aspect of the subject, for clothes are made of very different materials. To touch a blanket will set some individuals’ teeth on edge, and an irritable mood may result when rough material rubs against the skin. Again, while one person feels chills running down her back when she touches velvet, another will delight to feel a velvety surface. Another remarkable thing which Dr. Flaccus has brought before us is the striking difference between the preferences which girls have for certain articles of clothing.
FURTHER EFFECTS OF CLOTHES

Most of the girls to whom the questions were addressed put shoes first; gloves came very close, then neckwear, hats, underwear, jewellery, and ribbons; and though this may not fit in with the ideas of the humorists on the subject, the weakness for hats was shown to be less than one-third that for gloves.

Speaking of the effect that clothes may have upon the action of people, we may recall the way in which skirts and trousers may give rise to different habits. If one drops anything into a boy's lap he instinctively brings his knees together to prevent the object thrown from falling between them; whereas a girl would throw her thighs apart in order to make a receptacle with her frock. Advantage has been taken of this fact by those who wished to discover whether a person with whom they were dealing was a woman, or a man masquerading in female attire.

More than one novelist has enlarged on this theme, and Mark Twain has used it effectively in the "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." The occasion is when the hero visits Mrs. Judith Loftus at St. Petersburg, in order to find out what is going on with regard to the murder. Mrs. Loftus, whose suspicions were aroused, got the boy who was dressed up as a girl, to thread a needle, to throw a bit of lead at a rat, and having gained some evidence from these two experiments, she tried a third.

She says, "Keep your eye on the rats; you had
better have the lead in your lap handy.” Huckleberry’s story continues: “So she dropped the lump into my lap just at that moment. I clapped my legs together on it, and she went on talking, but only about a minute. Then she took off the hank (he was holding some yarn), and looked me straight in the face, but very pleasant, and said:

“Come, now—what’s your real name?”

“Wh-what, mum?”

“What’s your real name? Is it Bill, or Tom, or Bob, or what is it?”