

Dress Reform Quotes

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“These little girls were dressed according to the fashions of this age. Their dresses reached only to the knee, and their limbs were unclothed, except by thin cotton stockings and thin, laced morocco shoes. Their dresses were trimmed tastefully, at the cost of money and time, and yet **the bloom of health was absent.**” {HR, November 1, 1870 par. 2}

“Her shoes are light, and her stockings thin. True, her skirts are short, but **her limbs are nearly naked, covered by only a thin, flannel stocking reaching to her muslin drawers.** Her limbs and feet are chilled, while her brother's are warm. His limbs are protected by from three to five thicknesses; hers, by only one. Is she the feeble? Then **she needs the greater care.** Is she indoors more, and, therefore, less protected against cold and storm? Then she needs double care. But as she is dressed, there is nothing to hope for the future relative to her health but habitual cold feet, a congested brain, headache, disease of the liver and lungs, and an early grave.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 8}

“Her dress may be nearly long enough; but let it sit loosely and comfortably. **Then clothe her limbs and feet as comfortably, as wisely, and as well, as you do those of your boy;** and let her go out, and enjoy exercise in the open air, and live to enjoy health and happiness.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 9}

“Having noticed some of the **wrongs of the popular style of woman's dress,** we now wish to show in reference to the reform dress that—” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 1}

1. “It is convenient. No arguments are needed to prove that our style of dress is most convenient in the kitchen. In passing up and down stairs, the hands are not needed to hold up the skirts of our dresses. Being of a convenient length, they take care of themselves, while our hands are better employed.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 2}

“We can go out into the untrodden snow, or after a fall of rain, and, if our **feet and limbs are entirely protected,** all is dry and comfortable. We have no fears of taking cold as we trip along, unburdened by trailing skirts, in our morning walks. We can, in spring and summer, walk and work among our flowers without fear of injury from the dews of early morning. And then, **the lower portion of our skirts, not having been used as a mop, are dry, and clean, and comfortable,** not compelling us to wash and clean them, which is not always convenient when other important matters demand time and attention.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 3}

“In getting into, and out of, carriages, in passing old trunks, boxes, and other ragged furniture, and in walking over old, broken sidewalks, where nails have worked up an inch or two above the surface of the plank, our dresses are not exposed to a thousand accidents and rents to which the trailing dresses are fated. To us, this is a matter of great convenience.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 4}

2. “It is healthful. Our skirts are few and light, not taxing our strength with the burden of many and longer ones. **Our limbs being properly clothed,** we need comparatively few **skirts; and these are suspended from the shoulders.** Our dresses are fitted to sit easily, obstructing neither the circulation of the blood, nor natural, free, and full respiration. Our skirts being neither numerous nor fashionably long, do not impede the means of locomotion, but leave us to move about with ease and activity. All these things are necessary to health.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 5}

“Our limbs and feet are suitably protected from cold and damp, to secure the circulation of the blood to them, with all its blessings. We can take exercise in the open air, in the dews of morning or evening, or after the falling storm of snow or rain, without fears of taking cold. Morning exercise, in walking in the free, invigorating air of heaven, or cultivating flowers, small fruits, and vegetables, is necessary to a healthful circulation of the blood. **It is the surest safeguard against colds, coughs, congestions of the brain and lungs, inflammation of the liver, the kidneys, and the lungs, and a hundred other diseases.**” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 6}

“If those ladies who are failing in health, suffering in consequence of these diseases, would lay off their fashionable robes, **clothe themselves suitably** for the enjoyment of such exercise, and move out carefully at first, as they can endure it, and increase the amount of exercise in the open air, as it gives them strength to endure, and dismiss their doctors and drugs, most of them might recover health, to bless the world with their example and the work of their hands. **If they would dress their daughters properly, they might live to enjoy health, and to bless others.**” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 7}

Christian Mother: “**Why not clothe your daughter as comfortably and as properly as you do your son?** In the cold and storms of winter, his limbs and feet are clad with lined pants, drawers, woolen socks, and thick boots. This is as it should be; but your daughter is dressed in reference to fashion, not health nor comfort. Her shoes are light, and her stockings thin. True, her skirts are short, but her limbs are nearly naked, covered by only a thin, flannel stocking reaching to her muslin drawers. **Her limbs and feet are chilled, while her brothers are warm.** His limbs are protected by from three to five thicknesses; hers, by only one. Is she the feeble? Then she needs the greater care. Is she indoors more, and, therefore, less protected against cold and storm? Then she needs double care. But as she is dressed, **there is nothing to hope for the future relative to her health but habitual cold feet, a congested brain, headache, disease of the liver and lungs, and an early grave.**” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 8}

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3. “It is modest. Yes, we think it is the most modest and becoming style of dress worn by woman. If the reader thinks otherwise, will he please refer again to the illustration, and then tell us wherein this style of dress is faulty or unbecoming? True, it is not fashionable. But what of that? **FASHIONS DO NOT ALWAYS COME FROM HEAVEN.** Neither do they always come from the pure, the virtuous, and the good.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 10}

“It is true that this style of dress exposes her feet. **And why should she be ashamed of her well-clad feet, any more than men are of theirs? It is of no use for her to conceal the fact that she has feet.** This was a settled fact long before the use of trailing skirts distended by hoops, giving her the appearance of a haystack, or a Dutch churn.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 11}

“But does the popular style of woman's dress always hide her feet from the public gaze? See that lady passing over the muddy street, holding her skirts nearly twice as far from the ground as ours, **exposing, not only her feet, but her nearly-naked limbs.** Similar exposures are frequent as she ascends and descends the stairs, as she is helped into, and out of, carriages. These exposures are disagreeable, if not shameful; and a style of dress which makes their frequent occurrence almost certain, we must regard as a poor safeguard of modesty and virtue. But we did not design an exposure of this false modesty in relation to woman's feet, but simply a

defense of the style of dress which we regard, in every way, truly modest.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 12} “What style of dress can be neater, more becoming girls from the ages of five to fourteen years, than ours? Stand those girls of fashion beside these, and then say which appears most comfortable, most modest, and most becoming. The fashionable style is not as long as ours, yet no one laughs at those who follow that style for wearing a short dress. **Their limbs are nearly naked, while modesty and health clothe the limbs of the others.** Fashion and false modesty look upon these girls who have their limbs clad in reference to comfort, modesty, and health, with horror, but smile upon those whose dresses are quite as short, and whose limbs are uncomfortably, immodestly, and unhealthfully exposed. Here come the cross and the reproach, for simply doing right, in the face of the tyrant--Fashion. God help us to have the moral courage to do right, and to labor patiently and humbly in the great cause of reform.” {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 13}

IN BEHALF OF MY SISTERS WHO ADOPT THE REFORM DRESS, ELLEN G. WHITE. GREENVILLE, MONTCALM CO., MICH. {HR, SEPTEMBER 1, 1868 PAR. 14}

A Few Suggestions.

1. **We recommend the reform dress to all. We urge it upon none.** When Christian women see the wrongs of the fashionable style, and the benefits of ours, and put it on from a sense of duty, and have the moral courage to wear it anywhere and everywhere, then will they feel at home in it, and enjoy a satisfaction and blessing in trying to do right. {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 15}

2. **But those who adopt the reform dress should ever bear in mind the fact that the power of fashion is terrible; and that in meeting this tyrant, they need wisdom, humility, and patience,**--wisdom to speak and act so as not to offend the slaves of fashion unnecessarily; and humility and patience to endure their frowns, their slight, and their reproachful speeches. {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 16}

3. In view of existing prejudices against the reform dress, it becomes our duty in adopting it to avoid all those things which make it unnecessarily objectionable. **It should reach to within eight or nine inches from the floor.** The skirt of the dress should not be distended as with hoops. It should be as full as the long dress. With a proper amount of light skirts, the dress will fall properly and gracefully about the limbs. {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 17}

Anything eight or nine inches from the floor is not the reform dress. It should be cut by an approved pattern, and fitted and made by directions from one who has experience in this style of dress. {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 18}

4. Taste should be manifested as to colors. Uniformity in this respect, with those who adopt this style of dress, is desirable so far as convenient. Complexion, however, may be taken into the account. **Modest colors should be sought for. When figured colors are used, those that are large and fiery, showing vanity and shallow pride in those who choose them, should be avoided.** And a fantastic taste in putting on different colors, is bad, such as white sleeves and pants with a dark dress. Shawls and bonnets are not in as good taste with the reform dress, as sacks and hats, and caps in winter. {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 19}

5. And **be right yourselves.** Secure and maintain, in all the duties and walks of life, the heavenly adorning. The apostle speaks to the point: {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 20}

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Pet. iii, 1-4. {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 21}

MY DEAR SISTERS: Such an ornament, such a course of life and conduct, will give you influence for good on earth, and be prized in Heaven. Unless you can obtain and maintain this, I entreat you to lay off the reform dress. Do not disgrace it with a want, on your part, of neatness, cleanliness, taste, order, sobriety, meekness, propriety, modesty, and devotion to your families and to your God. Be a recommendation and an ornament to the reform dress, and let that be a recommendation and an ornament to you. E.G.W. {HR, September 1, 1868 par. 22}