

Sophocles, exclaims to her sister—"Surely your heroic spirit will prefer a beau's hand in Brussels lace to a stubborn Scævola without an arm."

No young lady of the nineteenth century wears, or should wear, lace previous to her marriage. In the reign of George II. etiquette was different, for we find the Duchess of Portland presenting Mrs. Montague, then a girl, with a lace head and ruffles.

Wrathfully do the satirists of the day rail against the expense of

"The powder, patches, and the pins,
The ribbon, jewels, and the rings,
The lace, the paint, and warlike things
That make up all their magazines,"⁶

and the consequent distress of the lace merchants, to whom ladies are indebted for thousands. After a drawing-room, in which the fair population appeared in "borrowed," i. e. unpaid, lace,⁷ one of the chief lacemen became well-nigh bankrupt. Duns besieged the houses of the great:—

"By mercers, lacemen, mantua-makers press'd;
But most for ready cash, for play distress'd,
Where can she turn?"⁸

The "Connoisseur," describing the reckless extravagance of one of these ladies, writes:—"The lady played till all her ready money was gone, staked her cap and lost it, afterwards, her handkerchief. He then staked both cap and handkerchief against her tucker, which, to his pique, she gained." When enumerating the various causes of suicide, he proposes "that an annual bill or report should be made out, giving the different causes which have led to the act." Among others, in his proposed "Bill of Suicide," he gives French claret, French lace, French cooks, &c.

The men, though scarcely coming up to the standard of Sir Courtly Nice,⁹ who has all his bands and linen made in Holland and washed at Haarlem, were just as extravagant as the ladies.

⁶ Cowley.

⁷ 1731. "Simile for the Ladies, alluding to the laces worn at the last Birthday and not paid for."

"In Evening fair you may behold
The Clouds are fringed with borrowed gold,

And this is many a lady's case
Who flaunts about in borrowed lace."

⁸ Jenyns, "The Modern Fine Lady."

⁹ Crown, "Sir Courtly Nice, or It Cannot Be," a Comedy, 1731.