Standing Out by Fitting In:
Navigating the Marriage Market of the Edwardian London Season

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For an upper-class Englishwoman during the Edwardian Age, marriage was the most important transaction of her life. There were many tools a young woman could use to raise or lower her value in the marriage market and the more value she possessed, the more option she would have in her choice of husband. The most important tool in her arsenal was that of dressing well. Impressing the highest-ranking members of London Society could unlock access to the highest-quality bachelors and good fashion sense helped a woman prove that she was worthy of being invited to the parties containing the best merchandise.

The London Season was the venue where most upper-class marriage negotiations took place. The Season, in some form, has always existed because the problem to which it provides a solution has always existed: where else but in a controlled market could rich people guarantee equally wealthy partners for their children? The earliest iteration of a formal English aristocratic "marriage market" was created by Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). Queen Elizabeth insisted upon official "presentations" of women within her court as a way to find them husbands that she approved of: those with titles, money, and land. By ensuring that men and women from a similar status found each other through these ceremonies, the Crown assisted in the consolidation of wealth within England for hundreds of years.[1] Because aristocratic families were focused on maintaining their estates through intermarriage with people from their own class, the marriage market of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries consisted of primarily land-based agreements between families with titles.

[1] For a full history of Queen Elizabeth I's marriage market and its perpetuation into the Georgian era, see Kristen Richardson, *The Season: A Social History of the Debutante* (Waterville, Maine: Thorndike Press, Gale: 2020).

By the end of the Georgian period (1714 – 1830), the London Season solidified into a form we would now recognize: a span of three or four months each year in which the aristocracy descended upon the city for the purpose of matchmaking. While it is true that there have always been more 'fashionable' times to come to London—doubtless when one's peers were also in town—the Season followed the legislative schedule of Parliament when Lords and their families were guaranteed to be present.[2] After Queen Victoria's marriage in 1840, the number of official royal events decreased and many of the fixtures prominent in the Edwardian Season began: charity dinners, cricket matches, concerts, operas, and theatre performances.[3] This increase of activity in the social sphere provided the perfect opportunity for wealthy and titled families to get together, socialize, and matchmake within their own class.

Historians have traditionally seen the London Season solely as a perpetuation of patriarchal and paternalistic power structures. It was about power—both acquiring and maintaining it—but how did that power actually flow through its functions? Given that England operated under a patriarchal system of government during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, it is often assumed that the Season also functioned as a microcosm of that all-too-familiar structure. But, within the confines of this system, women actually held the largest share of power when it came to creating marriage matches and acting as "arbiters of social acceptance or rejection" for newcomers to Society.[4] At first reluctant to invite these 'new-rich' families into their social groups, Victorian Society women created strict structures of exclusion. In cities like London, elaborate rules of etiquette, largely enforced by women, ensured that connections were not accidentally made with

[2] For more on the history of the London Season from an almost contemporary perspective, see Fifty Years of London Society, 1870-1920 (London: Eveleigh Nash company limited, 1920).
[3] Charles Eyre Pascoe, *London of To-Day, Handbook for the Season 1902* (London, 1902) gives an excellent account of the Season's changes during the Victorian era.
[4] Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), 16.

'undesirable' people. Leaving calling cards, adhering to a strict hierarchy when making introductions, and requiring formal invitations for dinners and parties restricted access to approved persons only.[5] By controlling the Season's events, Society women were also able to vet their children's interactions with potential partners.

The strict etiquette of the Victorian era grew out of the eighteenth-century ideals of courtesy, good character, even temperament, accomplishment, self-confidence and maintaining good habits, morals, and manners. Instead of championing superior personal conduct, the Victorians instead focused on policing the conduct of others. Under this system, those not adhering to the rules of etiquette were branded as "rude," and were not thought to have the "necessary qualifications" to be a part of the upper class.[6] Those that were attempting to gain entry into the coveted social Season made extraordinary efforts to learn these rules, but, ironically, their efforts often gave them away as outsiders. One of the only holdovers from the moralistic Georgian period was the importance of self-confidence, but combined with strict Victorian social etiquette, "self-confidence" morphed into "effortlessness" and became a requirement for a woman hoping to remain in Society: showing that she was actively *trying* to fit in indicated that she was not actually of the class she pretended to be.[7] One article in *The Gentlewoman,* an upper-class women's magazine, notes the futility of imitation without understanding, "nothing is more easily detected than affectation, and nothing so quickly transforms one into an unmitigated bore."[8] Closely monitored by women in power, those that dressed in a garish manner, styled the 'right' fashions

[5] Cas Wouters, a sociologist, gives a detailed explanation of the rules of Victorian etiquette in his article "Etiquette Books and Emotion Management in the 20th Century: The Integration of Social Classes," *Journal of Social History: Oxford* 29, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 107.
[6] For more detail on the transition between Georgian and Victorian manners, see Cas Wouters, "Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890," *Theory, Culture & Society* (2007): 23; and Wouters, "Etiquette Books and Emotion Management," 108.
[7] Wouters, "Informalization," 23.
[8] "The Gentlewoman's Opinion: On the Power of Personality," *The Gentlewoman: The Season Number* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 512.

incorrectly, lacked deference, or were identified as 'faking it' in any way, were politely disinvited from participation in the events of the London Season.

In a social hierarchy that was entirely based on status, marriage allowed a woman to 'level-up' in life. As laid out by Leonore Davidoff, from the ages of five to seventeen or eighteen (when she entered Society), there was no status change for a young girl; her wealth, level of influence, and her style of dress did not change. Marriage would allow her to increase her social power through enlarging her "sphere of influence" and by taking on the responsibilities of motherhood or of mentoring a young sister or family friend.[9] Once she did marry, she would often become a hostess of Society events and wield the power to influence others' marriage matches, get involved with her husband's political life, and, act as her new family's social representative. A woman's skill at hosting social events was "recognised as being essential to her husband's career" and for unmarried women, possessing these skills was another way to show value on the marriage market.[10]

Society women also helped facilitate their husbands' political lives during the Season. While women still did not have the right to vote, the wives of political candidates were often able to increase their husbands' popularity.[11] Also, as Philippa Pullar explains in her book *Gilded Butterflies: The Rise and Fall of the London Season*, "trained almost from birth in the art of entertaining, [women] provided, both in town and country, a rendezvous where men of all opinions would meet to discuss the affairs of the day. They exercised power largely through their influence

[9] Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 50-51.
[10] Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 32.
[11] For more about women's role in political campaigns, see Philippa Pullar, *Gilded Butterflies: The Rise and Fall of the London Season* (London, 1978); In the Season of 1906, just after an election, *The Gentlewoman* notes that the Society hostesses whose husbands belonged to the new party in power stepped up to lead the most prominent social functions, while some of the hostesses married to members of the opposition party took a step back from hosting duties. For more, see the articles "The Government Hostesses" and "The Opposition Hostesses" in the April 21, 1906 Season edition of *The Gentlewoman*.

with other ladies."[12] For instance, if a man became difficult or belligerent during political negotiations, all his colleagues needed to do was ask their wives to disinvite the belligerent man's wife and daughters from social events. When his wife figured out the cause for this disinvitation, she would implore her husband to stand down for the sake of his unmarried daughters who, without invitations, would be unable to secure good husbands.

Starting with the presentation of young women (debutantes) at court and the 'coming out' balls popularized in the later Victorian period, older Society women were in control of with whom a young debutante would be able to socialize. Maintaining this social exclusiveness regulated individual choice and excluded undesirable partners. As Kristen Richardson states, "the type of marriage the debutante ritual would provide was safe—the girls were presented to vetted company—and prevented a bad marriage from dragging down the status of an entire family."[13] Public, ticketed boy-girl social events called Almacks, popular in the late Georgian period, were phased out by the mid-Victorian era, replaced by private parties run entirely by popular Society hostesses.[14] This shift mirrors the increase in agency given to young women in their choice of husband. Even though women had some choice in partner, by only inviting *approved* bachelors to their dinners, balls, and parties, older women could control with whom their daughters socialized, and thus who they could consider for marriage. This had the added effect of shifting aristocratic society into a more private arena; one that fully discouraged fraternization between worthy and unworthy social groups.

We can also track the flow of power through the Season by examining its role as a literal power market; it existed to facilitate marriages that would maintain power (both monetary and

[12] Pullar, *Gilded Butterflies*, 124.
[13] Richardson, *The Season*, 4.
[14] For more on Almacks and other public events, see Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 23.

political) within the upper class. In the shifting industrial economy of the Victorian era, the definition of upper-class 'Society' was changing and aristocratic families soon realized that in order to maintain their wealth, they would need to start matching their titled sons with rich daughters of wealthy merchants and businessmen. Although arranged marriages had fallen out of fashion by the Victorian era, matches were often mutually agreed upon without love, but with full transparency regarding the transaction taking place. Author Montagu William Stephens depicts this type of agreement in a speculative, but very common, behind-the-scenes conversation between a titled upper-class man and a rich bride-to-be:

> "My lord," said she, "we both are used to the ways of the world, and, if I mistake not, understand them thoroughly. You have been good enough to offer me your hand; it is useless for either of us to talk of heart. It suited my purpose to accept that offer. Why did you make it? Did you want to marry me for my own sake? No. Had I been a girl fresh from the wilds of America with nothing but myself, would you have made that offer? Had I arrived here with my simple-hearted mother and without a fortune, would you, or rather, would your aristocracy, have thrown open your doors to welcome us? Would you have feted us, and sought after us, while in your heart or hearts you despised us both? No. I will act more generously by you than you have done by us. It is not too late. If you wish to retract your offer, you are at liberty to do so. You refuse? Be it so. But remember, the bargain is--my fortune, your rank. You are an English Marquis, and on our marriage, I shall take my position as your wife, as all those who have covertly sneered at their country's guests shall know." The future bridegroom, who desired nothing more, accepted this position at once.[15]

By the late nineteenth century, "only the most enormous landed aristocratic fortune could remotely compete with that of a middling industrialist," and eventually, the 'new rich' began to gain access to the Season through its public events.[16] This was the dawn of a new era for the marriage market. The expansion of the Season to include this new class of independently wealthy families caused changes to the social calendar and, as is seen alongside any influx of a new social group into an existing structure, an increase in the range of acceptable behavior for its

[15] Montagu Stephen Williams, *Round London, Down East and Up West* (London: Macmillan,1893), 229.
[16] Richardson, *The Season,* 152.

participants.[17] Young women of the Edwardian era beginning to travel more freely and attend more parties than their Victorian mothers did, but they still needed to maintain enough propriety to position themselves for the best marriage match. For a young woman, especially one without preexisting Society connections, exhibiting good taste was the best way to prove her value on the marriage market. Dressing well and being 'fashionable' enabled a young woman to make an immediate impression on the powerful women of Society.

Stories from the Edwardian London Season are instantly relatable in any era. They show real people making decisions, searching for love, and seeking power all while living with the fear of making mistakes and losing their place in Society. Young women deployed fashion, etiquette, and good taste, their mothers schemed, and Society women acted as game masters, all in an effort to determine who would enjoy the success of a good marriage. Studying the Season and its internal power structures gives us an opportunity to reflect on the complicated gender politics of the Edwardian era and to understand the arsenal of tools a young woman used to try to influence her marriage prospects.

[17] Wouters, "Informalization," 49.

Part I: The Edwardian Marriage Market

"The London Season is entirely matrimonial:
people are either hunting for husbands, or hiding from them."[18]

By the Edwardian era, public events like Ascot (a prestigious horse racing event), attending the Opera, and the summer regattas, allowed for more mingling between classes, but hostesses still threw private house parties, balls, dinners, and galas that were accessed by invitation only.[19] Younger people, and especially younger women, were the first to adapt to and embrace the new social organization of a Season somewhat released from the strict no-fraternization rules of the Victorian era. The new focus on public events and increased freedom allowed them to attend events and socialize with men without the whisper of impropriety. Cafes, tea rooms, public bathrooms, and specially designed browsing spaces in shops allowed married and unmarried women to congregate in public (albeit with unmarried women still chaperoned).[20] Public life also allowed women to participate independently in charity dinners, attend concerts, operas, the theatre, and social hours in Hyde Park.[21] In terms of fashion, this also meant that women had more events to dress for and more opportunities to make acquaintances with those that may advance their social and matrimonial prospects.

The Edwardian era moved at a faster pace than the Victorian era; more could be done in a day than could be done in a week without the aid of trains or cars. These factors gave rise to a marriage market that included more opportunities than ever, yet the sheer number of young people

[18] Oscar Wilde, *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young* (London, 1903), 11.
[19] But some of these events, like the masked balls that the Prince of Wales reintroduced in the 1890s, were meant to incorporate many categories of guest without promising them true social acceptance or later invitation. Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 17; 67.
[20] For more about these specially designed browsing spaces, see "Spacious Millinery and Outfitting Salons." *The Gentlewoman: The Season Number* XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905): 575.
[21] Pascoe, in his book *London of To-Day*, lists many locations and events open to or intended for women specifically.

involved meant that it was harder to make an impression during social events.[22] The importance of private events, small dinners, and person-to-person introductions was therefore strengthened. But how did a young woman make a good impression? And upon whom should she aim to make it? The Edwardian marriage market hinged primarily on the opinions of those who could make or break a young woman's Season: Society women.

However, older women who had grown up under the strict moral and social codes of the nineteenth century distrusted this new, public, London life. Maureen Montgomery notes, "there was a growing gulf of understanding between mothers and daughters that exacerbated the tensions already inherent in the coming-out process. Commercialization favored youth and the dismantling of formal codes of behaviour."[23] In a 1907 edition of *The Gentlewoman*, Mrs. George Cornwallis West, an older women who had participated in the Season for the previous thirty years noted the loss of manners within Society:

> The extraordinary restlessness, the craving for something new, before there has been time to understand or enjoy what is in hand, is of a necessity causing manners to deteriorate, and is certainly curtailing the amenities of social life on which past generations set such store. A nod takes the place of the ceremonious bow, a familiar handshake of the elaborate curtsey. The carefully worded, beautifully written invitation of fifty years ago is dropped in favour of the generally garbled telephone message.[24]

Though younger women embraced the new organization of the Season and reveled in the social freedom it gave them, the women with the most power, the older Society hostesses, still operated under stricter Victorian social codes. This made the Edwardian era a true transition period for women involved in the marriage market.

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[22] Mrs. Cornwallis West, "Social London: Past and Present. Part II," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 881 (May 25, 1907): 718.
[23] Maureen Montgomery, "Female Rituals and the Politics of the New York Marriage Market in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Family History* 23, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 61.
[24] Cornwallis West, "Social London: Past and Present, Part II," 718.

Faster travel during the early Edwardian era created a transatlantic community with "shared financial status and lifestyle choices" and helped form a year-long social circuit.[25] According to Richardson, "when debutantes from different cities met each other, they formed relationships, then later visited each other. They brought their daughters out together, creating intergenerational relationships that bolstered a more uniform class identity."[26] The introduction of a larger number of foreign participants to the London Season created a more competitive marriage market and further loosened English moral and social codes. Many of these international debutantes came from America and Australia. As noted in *The Gentlewoman,* these women were welcomed "back" to England as long-lost English kin coming home: "the Australian peeresses and great ladies are steadily gaining in number; the more the better; may their shadows never grow less, for our own blood coming back to us, vitalized by the vigour and the freedom from the trammels of tradition that beset us here is thrice welcome."[27] Referring to Americans as "cousins" had a similar effect of solidifying their kinship with the English. As noted in an April 1905 issue of *The Gentlewoman,* "the hotels in London are full of Americans just now, and although they are not making long visits at present, there is no doubt that later in the season a large number of our cousins from over the water will settle down for a lengthy stay in our midst."[28] To many Edwardians, the growth of the aristocracy and the continuation of the marriage market in societies created by the British Empire was a sign of the strength of the English upper class.

There was also an increase in the number of families participating in the Season from around England. Not only were the railroad promoters suddenly earning enough to participate in

[25] Mothers were able to choose which city they wanted their daughters to be presented in. It was more common that American families travelled to London to be presented at Court than the other way around, but because Seasons were staggered—New York's happened in the winter—so families were able to attend more than one in a single year; Richardson, *The Season,* 157.
[26] Ibid.
[27] "A Colonial Belle Goes a-Shopping," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 520.
[28] "A Caricaturist on Woman and Her Dress," *The Gentlewoman* XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905): 534.

the Season themselves, the increased availability of railway travel caused a redefinition of the Season's timeline.[29] It was no longer necessary to come to London for three full months when a family could easily commute to the city for smaller segments of the summer surrounding the most important social events. Likewise, Edwardian London's busy season was not as defined: "the difference between the ten weeks of the Season proper and the rest of the year is not so marked as when railways were in their infancy. Nowadays London is always more or less full, except perhaps during August and September, and one need never feel forlorn and friendless."[30]

The introduction of the motor car meant that spending the weekend at a country house or popping out for an afternoon drive to Windsor before returning for an evening theatre performance was suddenly possible. An article in the 1908 London Season edition of *The Gentlewoman* remarks on this new custom: "many of those living within easy reach of town now provide themselves with motors, and manage to combine town and country in a way they never could formerly. Even those that do come to London at this time of year spend for the most part three or even four days of each week 'week-ending' in the country."[31] The article also notes the smaller number of houses being rented out in the center of London indicating that the city enjoyed fewer long-term visitors. Another article in the same issue notes that "there are breaks too in the continuity of the season, such as Whitsuntide, Ascot Week, and Newmarket, during which a great many more people leave town than was the case a few years ago."[32]

After the coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, in 1902, several changes were made to the Season both in schedule and in general feel. The new monarchs shifted the

[29] Pullar, *Gilded Butterflies*, 119.
[30] "The Gentlewoman's Opinion: On the London Season," *The Gentlewoman* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908): 542.
[31] "Then and Now. How the London Season Survives Many Changes," *The Gentlewoman* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908): 564.
[32] "The Cost of the London Season," *The Gentlewoman* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908): 550.

official start of the Season back a few months to allow for their own preexisting social schedule and made several edits to the events of the Season. As mentioned in *The Gentlewoman* in 1908, "the King boasts the joie de vivre of a lad, and both he and the Queen have used all their influence, socially speaking, since they came to the throne to brighten up their capital—nor have their efforts been in vain."[33] The author notes that a few changes to the season in 1903, the first season of Edward's reign, led the way for even more reform of "social conditions and institutions."[34] The new King and Queen sparked energetic participation in the Season among young people and by 1908, the audience for all Season events had shifted to embrace this new audience. *The Gentlewoman* notes that the increased willingness among bachelors to dance and engage in Society, bolstered by the King's own participation, was a huge factor in the creation of the 'dance-dinner.' This new event that preceded formal evening balls was meant to encourage more personal connections between bachelors and debutantes within a shorter timeframe. In the early- to mid-Victorian era, men between the ages of eighteen and thirty had been reluctant to participate in the social events of the Season, seeing it as something they would do only when they were ready for marriage. Many men did not enter the marriage market until their early thirties.[35] But with the advent of more exciting parties, and the lure of rich young heiresses, Edwardian men began to enjoy the events of the Season at a younger age.

An increase of men at Season events caused great excitement and was noted with relief in *The Gentlewoman,* "the season without bachelors to dine and dance would be altogether flat, stale and unprofitable."[36] A 1908 edition remarks, "It is therefore most consoling to mark that during

[33] "Then and Now. How the London Season Survives Many Changes," 562.
[34] "Then and Now. How the London Season Survives Many Changes," 562.
[35] This is in stark contrast to women who were expected to enter the marriage market between the ages of 16 and 18 and get married within three Seasons. Once they reached their early twenties, their value on the marriage market dropped the point that it was not expected that they would ever get married.
[36] "Popular Bachelors in Society," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 534.

the last year or two we find young men much more socially inclined than in former days. Especially are there some very popular young 'eldest sons' going about."[37] But despite the fact that more men were enjoying Season events, individual hostesses still worried about having the right gender balance at parties: "the problem of how to procure a sufficient supply of dancing men is always with us."[38] *The Gentlewoman* also advised that "treading the light fantastic toe should be the pastime of the young men and maidens of society, not of the well-preserved beauties of forty, who used not only to take the floor, but also to annex all the eligible young men."[39]

Figure 1: A section in The Gentlewoman *Season edition of 1906 dedicated to eligible bachelors in Society. (HathiTrust)*

Besides the dream of finding love and happiness with her future husband, one of the intended outcomes for a young woman entering the Edwardian marriage market was to secure a marriage that would "consolidate kinship networks" related to class and economic interests, as well as advance her own sphere of influence in Society.[40] Similar to Victorian hostesses, Edwardian matriarchs, often hostesses themselves, worked to ensure that their daughters socialized with the most eligible men available. Like a financial analyst might with the stock market, hostesses followed the availability of

[37] "The Coming Season," *The Gentlewoman* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908): 554.
[38] "The London Season of 1906: A Survey of the Coming Season," *The Gentlewoman* XXXII, no. 824 (April 21, 1906): 573.
[39] "Then and Now. How the London Season Survives Many Changes," 564.
[40] Montgomery, "Female Rituals," 35, 36-54.

bachelors in Society quite closely. In each London Season edition of *The Gentlewoman*, a lengthy section would be devoted to highlighting the eligible bachelors of the year. Profiles of each man were accompanied by a photograph, a short description of his family's work or wealth, and a note about his social activities in the past few months.[41]

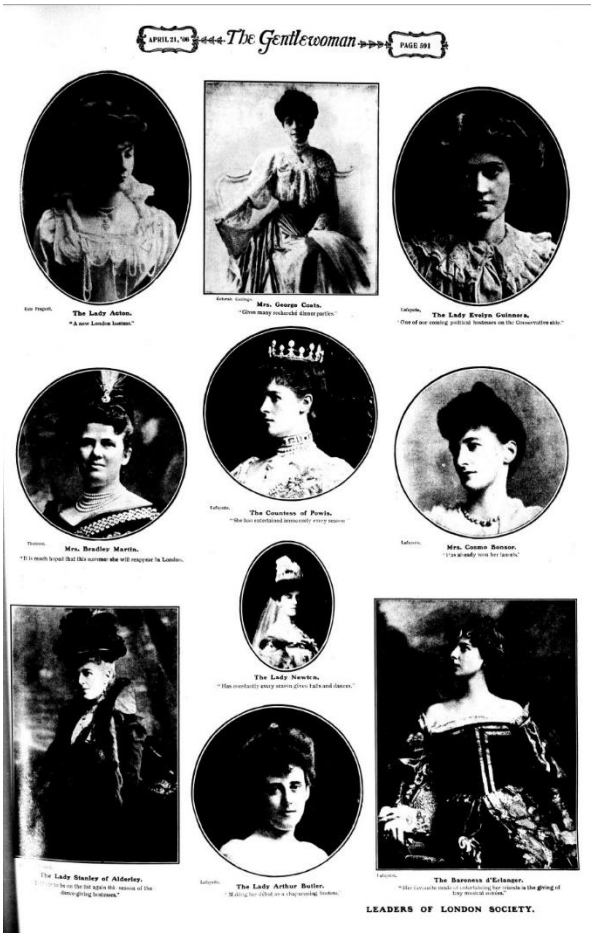

Figure 2: "Leaders of London Society" from the 1906 London Season Edition of The Gentlewoman. *(HathiTrust)*

The most extensive section of Edwardian issues of *The Gentlewoman* London Season edition was dedicated to profiles of new debutantes and prominent hostesses, ostensibly so that young women and their mothers could size up the competition and take note of the events they wished to attend. Each hostess' profile included a photograph and short description of the type of entertainment she would be providing. These sections were often titled along the lines of "Leaders of London Society," indicating the social importance and rank of these women. Many of the profiles included statements like, "her social gatherings are generally graced by the presence of one or other of the Royal Family."[42] This indicated to the reader that impressing that particular hostess was especially important as they had connections to the King and Queen and therefore circulated in the top levels of Society. The

[41] 1907's *Gentlewoman* Season edition has a great example of this type of article: "Popular Bachelors in Society," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 534.
[42] "Leaders of London Society," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 538.

inclusion of this vital social information in *The Gentlewoman*, meant that those wishing to break into the Season's marriage market would also know who they needed to impress or connect with in order to attend the best parties.

If a woman did not immediately begin hosting her own events after marrying, she would at least be able to use her elevated social status to maintain connections with other Society women in the hopes of one day securing a good marriage match for her own children. *The Gentlewoman* often included profiles of these women who may, in future, become hostesses in their own right. An article in the 1906 Season edition titled, "An Account of the Principal Young Married Woman Who, for a Variety of Reasons, Have Not Yet Done Any Extensive Entertaining on Their Own Account" states:

> Besides the regular hostesses in London society this season, there are no end of interesting personalities in the many young married women who will, most of them, in the future be amongst our leading great ladies, but who, from the fact generally of their either having been quite recently married, or their own or their husband's people being already great and leading leaders of London society, or oftener still, purely from personal considerations—these very natural in the recently married young women, whose greatest happiness for some time to come will most likely lie in being alone with husband and children—are disinclined to enter the lists yet as regularly recognised hostesses.[43]

For women who married into families that already had established Society hostesses, it was expected that they would let their new family's higher-ranking women lead during the Season. The 1907 edition of *The Gentlewoman*'s Season edition indicates that women in these situations should "leave the entertaining for the family to the elder members of the reigning heads of their houses."[44] By featuring these newly married but less powerful women in its pages, *The Gentlewoman* was allowing readers to take note of possible future Society hostesses. This helped mothers with younger daughters sow the seeds of familiarity with these women in case they became influential in the years to come.

[43] "Young Married Women in Society," *The Gentlewoman* XXXII, no. 824 (April 21, 1906): 596.
[44] "Young Married Women in Society," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 535.

Up until her official entrance into Society, a young girl was relatively sheltered and would have lacked the power to determine her own official social schedule. The only social events she would have attended were small dinners during which she was not expected to talk or impress anyone.[45] Prior to becoming a debutante, younger aristocratic girls were expected to attend lessons meant to prepare them for the Season—the most important time of her life. Some girls were sent away to school to be trained, while some remained at home with governesses and went to lessons individually. *The Gentlewoman* ran advertisements for both options in its "Education Bureau" section. An endorsement for a girls' school boasts, "the aim of their school is to give the girls a healthy happy life, to train their characters and develop their powers, thus fitting them to become good and intelligent women of wide and varied interests, able to make a good use of the leisure which comes to so many girls after leaving school."[46] An endorsement for dancing lessons hints that lessons could be taken by either girls or boys to prepare them for the Season: "if you wish your children to be taught by a lady, I can recommend Mrs. Douglas Logan, who holds classes at The Studio, 95, Gloucester Road, South Kensington. Should you however, prefer a master, Mr. T. Gilmer gives lessons at Queen's Gate Hall, S.W."[47]

One of the largest benefits of being "in Society" was having access to vast networks of information about jobs, investment opportunities and political decisions. But in an ironic loop, in order to gain access to these networks, a woman already had to have access to one of the most important: that of the rules of fashion, style, and upper-class etiquette. The London Season created a "soft economy" where people who were already "in the know" about these rules acted as

[45] "Education in Society," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 550 gives a contemporary view on this norm. For context about a young woman's life pre-coming out, see Davidoff, *The Best Circles,* 51.
[46] "The leisure," of course, meaning the London Season. "Education Bureau," 550.
[47] "Education Bureau," 550.

gatekeepers to the rest of the network.[48] For those who were just entering this system—newly rich families—learning the rules of fashion, style, and etiquette became the only way to engage with Society. More than simply owning the correct clothing, women were also expected to know how to *style* those pieces to appear *fashionable*, a quality that strikes a difficult balance between over and underdressing. Overdressing was a constant hazard for those who lacked the ability or knowledge to edit their outfits. Since the sharing of social knowledge surrounding the Season was often confined to mother-daughter relationships, those without access to an older generation who had experienced the Season were often left out. Growing up in a family that participated in the Season every year allowed a young woman to absorb information and customs, attend the appropriate lessons, and develop excitement surrounding her own eventual participation. Without that environment, young women in newly wealthy families had to seek out mentorship in non-traditional ways.

Mothers, widows and unmarried aunts often served as chaperones and mentors for young debutantes.[49] As long as these women maintained a "finger on the pulse" and could keep up with ever-changing social customs, they were able to be used as surrogate kin for young ladies in need.[50] Interestingly, some prominent professional women were also known to offer their guidance in exchange for payment. In her memoir, Lady Duff Gordon, fashion designer and owner of Lucile, mentioned secretly coaching the "new rich" after making them their garments for events. After all, a woman may purchase a gown, but not know how to properly style it or to which events she should wear it! Some ladies' magazines ran classified advertisements for coaching and/or shopping

[48] Richardson, *The Season*, 14.
[49] Likewise, wealthy gay men, 'committed bachelors,' found their place accompanying young women on walks and to events and became indispensable to women seeking non-matrimonial male chaperonage. This helped shield them from a hostile patriarchal social environment. Read more in Richardson, *The Season*, 14.
[50] Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 27.

services from women who were 'in the know,' but for some reason had financial need. From *The Gentlewoman* London Season edition in 1908: "an artistic gentlewoman, with excellent taste, would assist a lady with her shopping in London, 5s per day; or would undertake shopping orders for ladies abroad or country; quick, good references, cash, 10 per cent. commission."[51] But being sponsored by a Society woman could also include other social benefits beyond receiving fashion advice. According to Davidoff, in the late Victorian era, "professional actors and actresses could not be received at Court, nor for that matter could tradespeople. But definitions were elastic and the sponsors or relations of these people might be important enough to smooth over an early career which was not quite acceptable."[52] Women who were coming from abroad or who had an undesirable background could hire a chaperone or sponsor for themselves or their daughters to smooth their entry into London Society.[53]

For most new debutantes, it was extremely exciting, if shocking, to be suddenly faced with three months' worth of back-to-back social events and the expectation to impress lurking at every turn. Dinner parties took on new meaning as debutantes experienced being a part of Society for the first time, even if they were still on the lowest rung of the social ladder. One account of the Season written by an American debutante attending her first London Season alongside her elder, recently married sister Cornelia says, "I was lucky; for on Cornelia's right hand was the most distinguished of generals, now an Earl, and I, poor little mite of a debutante, sat on his other hand, and, instead of being distrait or stand off, why, he was simply delightful, told me lots, and five minutes after I had sat down I felt as if I had known him for ages."[54]

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[51] "Personal Service," *The Gentlewoman* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908): III.
[52] Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 64.
[53] Richardson, *The Season*, 139.
[54] "A Week in the London Season: Letters of an American Debutante," *The Gentlewoman* XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905): 540.

The frenzy of the Season was exhilarating yet exhausting, and in the Edwardian era, more social activity was packed into each day than ever before. For both debutantes and bachelors, the day would sometimes start at eight or nine in the morning and run until three or four a.m. the next day with little time to rest between activities.[55] In the column written by the American debutante, the pace was overwhelming. "At last my first day came to an end, and, though it was nice, yet I think Cornelia crams too much into one. However, when I say this she only says, 'Wait and see. You will get so accustomed to rushing about that you won't enjoy anything unless you are in a continued whirl.' Odd this, isn't it? But then Cornelia says I am silly and too young yet, so I suppose I shall improve in time."[56] *The Gentlewoman,* indicated a similar pace for bachelors, "it is, indeed, generally midnight before the well starched tie and immaculate white waistcoat are finally settled to the wearer's satisfaction. Then, indeed, begins four hours or so of dancing, supping and sitting out, in the fashion that obtains for all time among the young men and maidens of the upper ten."[57] As noted in *The Lady's Realm,*

> The very bustle and scramble of such an existence constitutes more than half of its attraction. The mad rush is all so thoroughly in keeping with the modern worship of perpetual motion which pervades the age. The idea of cramming as much excitement and amusement into every bare twenty-four hours as would have sufficed our ancestors for a week is part and parcel of our modern conception of enjoyment.[58]

Despite the incredible pressure on young women, the Season was something that they looked forward to for their entire lives and, judging by the articles in *The Gentlewoman*, preparing for the Season was extremely exciting. One article boasts, "one of the charms of the London Season is that it is always full of surprises. New hostesses, new fashions, new beauties, new young men

[55] An account of a young person's day is detailed in "The London Season of 1907," The Gentlewoman: The Season Number XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 525.
[56] "A Week in the London Season," 538.
[57] "Popular Bachelors in Society," 534.
[58] "Is It Worth While?" *The Lady's Realm* XXVII, no. 164 (June 1910): 143.

are what we look forward to."[59] Debutantes, especially those who did not grow up in London Society, spent their younger years reading about brushes with royalty, magnificent balls, summer days at Ascot, and studying the latest fashions in anticipation of their own time to shine.[60] A woman's Season was looked back upon with fondness. As noted by one ex-debutante in 1910, "for when all is said and done, an over-scribbled engagement list is but the hallmark of social success, and constitutes a triumph in itself."[61] Another, writing in 1912 of the experience of a debutante, says, "at the end of about six weeks of gaiety, such as this going everywhere, seeing everybody, she will be found willing to retire gracefully to the country, carrying with her nothing but pleasant memories planted to thrive in her garden for ever."[62] Once a young woman experiences a successful Season, *The Lady's Realm* suggests, "the craving for social excitement is always there. Who ever met a woman who, once having enjoyed the exhilaration of success from a social point of view, was afterwards ever content with anything short of the much-desired sensation, and who did not regard such triumphs as absolutely essential to her happiness in life?"[63]

[59] "The London Season of 1907," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 525.
[60] *The Gentlewoman* Season editions notes younger girls studying their copies in at least two articles. See "A Colonial Belle Goes a-Shopping," The Gentlewoman: The Season Number XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 520; and "The Twins Go a-Shopping," The Gentlewoman: The Season Number XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905): 568.
[61] "Is It Worth While?" 143.
[62] "The London Season by a Debutante," *The Gentlewoman and Modern Life* 44, no. 1138 (April 27, 1912): 576.
[63] "Is It Worth While?" 143.

Part II: The Importance of Fashion

"To preach the importance of fashion to women of fashion would be bringing coals to Newcastle with a vengeance. No one is more alive to the value of personal appearance than the fashionable woman."[64]

A young woman aiming to increase her value on the marriage market needed to deploy all the weapons in her arsenal to achieve that goal: manners, good taste, and of course, fashion. The Season was an event centered on display, and a woman, without even talking, was speaking volumes about her preparedness for entering Society through the way she wore her clothing. For young women from families already embedded in upper-class Society, following the latest fashions and 'fitting in' was a skill developed through childhood. But for the daughters of newly rich families attempting to enter Society, additional study and training was required.

The Gentlewoman often described fashionable styles and commented on their appropriateness for various events and age groups.[65] In a memorable article in the 1907 London Season edition, a matriarch writes of a shopping trip with her young Australian cousin once removed who needed to stock up on the latest fashions for the Season. The girl, she says, was "positively athirst for the sensations of a season in town" and had studied her copy of *The Gentlewoman* "from cover to cover and takes its cue on all questions of clothes and fashion."[66] The author spends much of the article commenting on various fashions seen in the London shops and who they might be worn by, "she explored the frocks and the tailor suits and the hats there with a will, and even the teagowns, consoling herself for being too young for a teagown by ordering

[64] "The Mecca of Millinery," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 558.
[65] While woman's magazines held most of the fashion commentary meant for public consumption, some designers did produce their own booklets. Redfern's *The London Season's Fixtures* advised women on gowns for all occasions.
[66] "A Colonial Belle Goes a-Shopping," 520.

the sweetest thing to serve as a teafrock…"[67] Similarly, a woman in 1905 took a friend's twin daughters shopping and offered her opinion to *The Gentlewoman* on the dresses observed, "pink is the prevailing tea-frock notion; of course, it's far the prettiest colour for the afternoon light, and the afternoon fire, and afternoon circumstances generally."[68] By commenting on fashion as observed, *The Gentlewoman* was able to instruct readers on how to dress. But paradoxically, because these descriptions relied on the reader having already seen or experienced the fashion being discussed, the magazine subtly excluded lower-class women from its instruction.

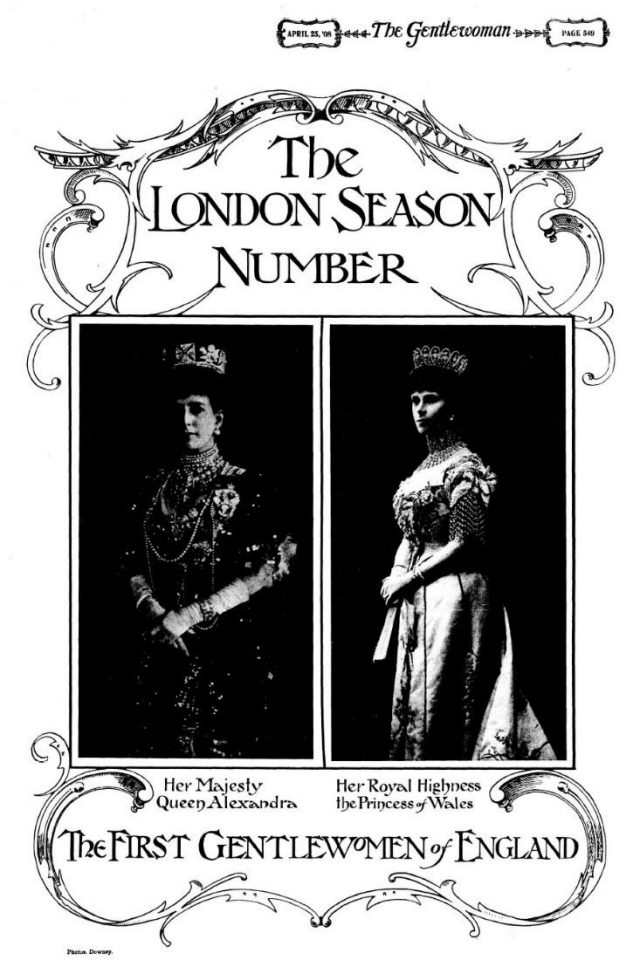

Figure 3: The title page of the 1908 Season Edition of The Gentlewoman *showing Queen Alexandra and the Princess of Wales as the "First Gentlewomen of England," indicating their status as the ideal Society women. (HathiTrust)*

Overall, Edwardian fashion between 1905 and 1908, was extremely elaborate and highly decorated. The Season acted as a forum in which to debut the newest garments, and the fashion trends of the Season closely followed the fashion trends of the era. Society women and, most prominently, Queen Alexandra, were often at the forefront of fashion and helped to set trends in England.[69] The Queen's fashions were described in detail whenever she was seen in public during the Season. In 1905, a young

[67] "A Colonial Belle Goes a-Shopping," 520.
[68] "The Twins Go a-Shopping," *The Gentlewoman* XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905): 570.
[69] The Queen was mentioned in many articles throughout *The Gentlewoman* as being exquisitely dressed. From the accounts included, she was clearly help up as a leader in fashion.

debutante described her fashion at the opera as "so much better than many of the over-dressed women I saw! Just with a high aigrette in her lovely hair, and a deep collar necklace of great pearls and diamonds round her graceful slight throat, and then the simplest of square-cut black gowns, with just a bunch of Malmaison carnations pinned on it."[70] At a garden party in 1907, she was reported wearing a white gown and white "Eton straw sailor" and was described as looking "absurdly young" and was praised for her "grace and simplicity."[71] She also "set the fashion for wearing amethysts" and had much of her jewelry re-set, inspiring many young women to do the same.[72]

The most luxurious items in a woman's wardrobe came from Paris, or at least from Parisian designers. Based on the frequency of the use of words like "French" and "Parisian" in fashion descriptions, the more French the fashion, the better! Descriptions in *The Gentlewoman* and *The Lady's Realm* include: "the lingerie there everyone knows; it is famous for its daintiness and Frenchiness"; "and then the hats there are every season better and better, more absolutely chic, it possible brings Paris to our doors"; "French fashions rule in this famous millinery atelier"; "but the cunning of Paris has perfected the blouse-bodice"; "the West End of London vies with Paris in being the happy hunting ground for the searcher after the useful and beautiful feminine attire"' "I wonder if these Parisian folks dream hats!"; and, most dramatically, "I believe some of those Paris folks are endowed with witchcraft."[73] *The Gentlewoman* also ran a regular feature titled "Paris Fancies and Fashions" to bring the latest innovations to its English readers through reviews of the fashions seen in plays and at French Society events. The 1906 Season Edition of *The Gentlewoman*

[70] "A Week in the London Season," 538.
[71] "Cosy Corner Chat," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 519.
[72] "Cosy Corner Chat," (1907): 519; "A Week in the London Season," 537.
[73] "A Colonial Belle Goes a-Shopping," 520; "The Moods of Fashion," *The Gentlewoman* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908): 577; Mrs. Eric Pritchard, "London and Paris Fashions," *The Lady's Realm* XX (May-October 1906): 413; "Spacious Millinery and Outfitting Salons," *The Gentlewoman* XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905): 575; "The Twins Go a-Shopping," 568; "A Review of the Dress World," *The Gentlewoman* XXXII, no. 824 (April 21, 1906): 600.

remarks, "M. Lavedan's comedy 'Le Nouveau Jeu' has been revived at the Variétés with the original cast… From a point of view of fashion this revival is particularly interesting, as the dresses worn by these charming artistes have been specially created by three of the leading Paris couturiers."[74] The article then goes on to describe in detail the outfits worn by the actors and how they would be incorporated into the Season.

Figure 4: An advertisement in a 1900 issue of Ladies' Home Journal *shows the difference between the Victorian and Edwardian silhouettes.*

Although some French designers opened shops in London, the strong emphasis on French fashion meant that some women were at a disadvantage when it came to acquiring appropriate garments.[75] It was customary for Society women to travel to France each year just before the Season (usually in March or April) to scope out the latest styles and do some shopping.[76] However, some women, like Heather Firbank, a London Society woman featured in the book *London Society Fashion*, were not able to go to Paris to shop. According to the book's authors, "As a single woman it would not have been easy for her to make trips abroad."[77] Accessing Parisian Society networks was often only possible through the connections of a woman's husband or father. Heather, unfortunately, had neither during her time in Society. Likewise, a woman in the lower half of the upper-class income bracket may not have had the means to travel to Paris every year

[74] "Paris Fancies and Fashions," *The Gentlewoman* XXXII, no. 824 (April 21, 1906): 605.
[75] The "Cosy Corner Chat," in the April 15, 1905 edition of *The Gentlewoman* noted the large number of French establishments popping up in London for the ease of shopping.
[76] For more on the timeline of the Season see Cassie Davies-Strodder, Jenny Lister, and Lou Taylor, *London Society Fashion, 1905-1925: The Wardrobe of Heather Firbank* (London: V&A Publishing, 2018).
[77] Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion*, 30.

for the sole purpose of shopping. Women in these situations risked committing a fashion faux pas by wearing London-made gowns to the most formal events.

The largest change in fashion from the Victorian to the Edwardian era was the silhouette of women's clothing. The invention of the S-bend, or straight-front corset was intended as a way to relieve pressure on the lungs and improve overall health. Ironically, the newly re-shaped corset actually increased the pressure on the groin and resulted in back pain for most women.[78] The S-bend corset pushed the hips back and the bust forward, creating the famous 'S' shaped figure when viewed from the side.[79] The new corset ended lower on the chest and provided much less support for the bust than the Victorian corset had. This created a mono-bosom (also sometimes called pigeon-breasted) effect where the breasts were not lifted and separated as they had been in the Victorian era. Larger women would augment the minimal support offered by the S-bend corset with a bust bodice. For smaller women, padding out a bust bodice and adding ruffles or 2-3 layers of ruched ribbon to their corset covers, helped to create the desired mono-bosom shape.[80] This style, while more easily seen in the high-necked morning or afternoon dresses, was less

Figure 5: The "Perfect Contour" bust bodice from the Symington Corsetry Collection, 1902. This is a side view with center front facing toward the right and indicated by the bow loop visible at the top edge. (Image Leicestershire)

[78] See more in Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[79] By 1908, the waistline of most dresses resembled a combination of the Empire waist of the Georgian era in the back, with a swoop downward to princess style in the front (waist seam closer to the natural waist). For more, see "The Transition of the Waist," *The Gentlewoman* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908): 558.
[80] Hip padding could also be added for of women who were more top heavy, or who were thin overall to create a fuller hourglass figure and to achieve ideal Edwardian proportions. For more, about Edwardian undergarments and their construction, see dress historian Bernadette Banner's recreation of the above Symington bust bodice in her video, "Achieving That Classic Edwardian Shape: Reconstructing a 1902 Bust Bodice," published April 16, 2020, https://youtu.be/CbzaBr4W4kk.

noticeable in eveningwear and ballgowns where the necklines were lower and the dress bodice more form fitting. But the key to attractiveness was in the overall shape of the body; according to ideal Edwardian proportions, the waist should be 10 inches smaller than the bust, and the hips should be 15 inches larger than the waist. On top of the corset and padding, women wore at least one petticoat to fill out their skirts and to further emphasize their proportions.

Figure 6: 1910 corset cover with added ruffles to augment the bust. (The Met)

In contrast to men's understated and uniform fashions, Society women's fashions in the Edwardian era were exquisitely decorated with lace, embroidery, applique, ribbons and flowers.[81] To express their youthfulness and to stand out in a crowd, young women used softer, simpler, more feminine fabrics in whites and soft pinks. Men were highly critical of women's fashion during this era, especially of the number of accessories required. As noted in an article titled "A Caricaturist on Woman and Her Dress" in the 1905 London Season edition of *The Gentlewoman*, "the holding up of a long gown in walking, the holding of a hat in a high wind, the holding on to the parasol, purse, and handkerchief, require such tact and cleverness that few can perform these feats without inviting the moderate

Figure 7: Fashion plate, 1906. Men's outfits in the Edwardian era were uniform and relatively unadorned compared with women's fashion. (V&A)

[81] To get a sense of this contrast, see the photos and illustrations in Valerie Cumming's *The Visual History of Costume Accessories* (New York: 1998).

ridicule of man."[82] Also noted in the same issue, "the middle-aged man, except those who live to make a splash in society, or purely for outside impression, prefer the wife who does not dress over much, his idea being that the best dressed women are those whose dress one never notices at all."[83] Fashion choices related to marriage and matchmaking have traditionally been described as a mating tactic: dress to impress the man of one's dreams. But men, overall, were not overly concerned with a woman's clothing unless it was deemed absurd by their standards of societal comportment. In the same *Gentlewoman* article, the author notes, "I suppose that it may be generally accepted as an admitted fact, that women dress more to please other women than to please men … In fact, I venture to say that after any society function, were all the men who had been present put through an examination as to the dresses they had seen worn, not one in five hundred could give you the vaguest idea of any."[84]

Impressing other women with good fashion sense, and therefore displaying her knowledge of the systems of Society, was essential to maintain a woman's market value. Society women were the key to accessing the parties, dinners and balls that would include the best bachelors. Likewise, forging a relationship with a well-connected hostess meant that a debutante and her mother might one day dine with royalty, be introduced to a bachelor within the hostess' own family, or make a political or financial connection between her husband and theirs. Dressing fashionably and correctly indicated that a woman was 'in the know' and was either born of upper-class rank or was rich enough to hire someone to teach her how to fit in. As noted in *The Gentlewoman* in 1905, "the English above all other people had the power of 'fitting in.' Without this faculty what we know as the London Season would never have had an existence."[85] Because of the complex hierarchical

[82] "A Caricaturist on Woman and Her Dress," 532.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] "Evolution of the London Season," *The Gentlewoman* XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905): 550.

system present in London Society, impressing the *right* powerful women was the only way to make the best possible marriage.

The Edwardian Season was rife with instances of women monitoring the acceptability of other women's dress. This statement in *The Gentlewoman* indicates that this was a well-known practice and something a women should be prepared for: "a woman in court society, whether in public or domestic space, was monitored first by her personal maid and then by her family, other household servants, visitors and other women met out shopping, at tea parties and at grand soirees, whether in town or in the country, at home or abroad."[86] It was expected that women would be closely observed for any hint of impropriety. As previously discussed, being effortless in one's style was key to fitting in. Any hint of 'trying too hard' was a sign that one had to *work* at being elite and therefore could not possibly be. Richardson states, "young women from newly rich families studied how to behave like aristocrats and tried to mirror their effortlessness. In doing so, they hoped to conceal their bourgeois origins well enough to marry into the aristocracy without causing real embarrassment to themselves or their new husbands."[87] While it was important to impress, it was also important to avoid going too far and inadvertently broadcasting one's misunderstanding of taste to one's peers and superiors. There was a fine line between garishness and respectability in dress. One of the secrets to success was to stand out by using bright or distinctive colors while keeping adornments minimal.[88] Most women spent hours with their milliners and dressmakers attempting to design exclusive garments that were at once completely unique and adherent to current fashion trends while also trying to maintain the illusion that they

[86] "A Caricaturist on Woman and Her Dress," 532.
[87] Richardson, *The Season*, 267.
[88] This is according to Mrs. Eric Pritchard in her article "London and Paris Fashions," *The Lady's Realm* XX (May-October 1906): 415.

were not trying to outshine other women.[89] It was an impressive feat! It was important to show that one had enough money to create one-of-a-kind custom pieces but was also important to look humble enough to make a good and conscientious woman of society.

Throughout a typical day during the London Season, women were required by social custom to change their clothing at least three times. As chronicled by the young American debutante in London in 1905, costume changes were necessary for each activity: breakfast, riding in the park, luncheon, afternoon visits to friends, dinner and for evening events such as a balls or visits to the opera.[90] Likewise, for each hallmark event attended during the Season, a unique outfit would be required. Some garments could be reused, if necessary, but for more formal events or events that would be attended by the public, it was imperative that the woman not be seen in a repeated costume. As noted by co-authors Cassie Davies-Strodder, Jenny Lister and Lou Taylor in their book *London Society Fashion, 1905-1925: The Wardrobe of Heather Firbank*, "for each different event there was a specific style to be worn and it was crucial that these showed an awareness of current trends and changes in fashion."[91] However, since each garment was created for the purchaser, the Season's fashions were determined by what was "in" during the months of February, March and April. As noted in the London Season edition of *The Gentlewoman* printed in April 1905, "the fashions are determined, have long been determined. *There will be nothing newer than what we can buy now*."[92] It was necessary for women to order their dresses and accessories well ahead of time to have them made and delivered by the start of the Season. As also noted in *The Gentlewoman*, "later on we shall be overdone with orders and unable to supply our

[89] David Bond notes the immense amount of time it took to create most garments in *The Guinness Guide to 20th Century Fashion* (Enfield, Middlesex: Guinness Superlatives, 1981), 10.
[90] "A Week in the London Season," 537.
[91] Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion,* 27.
[92] "Cosy Corner Chat," *The Gentlewoman* XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905): 529.

customers so quickly.' To order then at once, that is the thing to do."[93] Every woman aiming to participate in any Season event thus placed her orders in March and April and eagerly awaited delivery in early May, just before events began increasing in frequency.

Figure 8: A day dress designed by Maison Rouff in a collection of fashion plates from 1901. (V&A Department of Prints and Drawings)

Of the activities conducted daily, there were few as well attended as riding or walking in Rotten Row. 'The Row,' as it was sometimes called, referred to the broad track that ran along the southern edge of Hyde Park used as a fashionable place to ride horses, walk, and socialize with peers. According to a book titled *Fifty Years of London Society* published in 1920, "it is there that you meet your friends and are introduced by them to their acquaintances; it is the recognised resort and you must 'show yourself' there, or be content to grope for evermore in social darkness. More matches are made in the Park and the walks on either side of the Row than in all the drawing-rooms of London put together…"[94] The Row was, in the sequence of the day, often the first place where women would dress to impress and one of the few *public* fashion displays she would enjoy regularly. According to the 1906 London Season edition of *The Gentlewoman*, "if you want to

[93] Ibid.

[94] The Row was an important place to make connections, and while debutantes did enjoy some freedoms, they women would often be accompanied by their mothers or by a chaperone on this journey – aunt, sister, etc. – so that proper introductions could be made. *Fifty Years of London Society, 1870-1920* (London: Eveleigh Nash Company Limited, 1920), 58-9.

study the fashions an object lesson may be learnt at the right hours in the Row for modish walkers. I know that Mme. Y., one of London's most sought-after dressmakers, often seeks her inspirations there instead of going to Paris."[95] Morning or 'day' dresses were characterized by lighter fabrics and could either be one piece or a connected bodice and skirt meant to be layered over a blouse.[96] Other common styles included "tailor-mades," matching jackets and skirts made of wool serge and worn with blouses that were based on tailored riding habits typically worn by men. Tailor-mades soon became a hallmark of London-made fashion.[97] The Row was one of the places where mothers and young women would play the complex game of introductions between acquaintances. If they dressed well, they were more likely to make an advantageous acquaintance that could later result in an invitation to a Society event.

Figure 9: An afternoon dress from 1903 by Jeanne Halleé. It was common for afternoon dresses to be darker in color to reduce the amount of washing needed after being out and about in London. (The Met)

After a quick rush home from Hyde Park to change, the young woman of the Season might again set off for an afternoon of 'calling' or visiting acquaintances and friends. Morning calls were also common but were shorter and considered the most formal of visits; it was in the morning that one would pay calls to one's social superiors. For morning calls, it was expected that outdoor clothing (including hats and gloves) stay firmly in place for the duration of the visit. Afternoon calls generally happened

[95] "Young Married Women in Society," *The Gentlewoman* XXXII, no. 824 (April 21, 1906): 559.
[96] For beautiful photos of extant dresses of this style, see Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion*, 31
[97] Redfern of London was a popular designer of these frocks. Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion*, 31; Often, "picturesque" French fashions were held up as the antithesis of London "tailorisms" or tailor-made garments. "The Twins Go a-Shopping," 570.

between the hours of three and six p.m. These were shorter, less personal visits between social peers and could include visits between sexes—if both parties were married. In the afternoon, "ceremonial" calls would take place between women who were acquainted, but not close friends. Calls between friends happened later in the afternoon, between five and six o'clock. Sundays were reserved for the closest of friends and family.[98] As noted by Davidoff, afternoon calls were when "wives made the contacts which led to dinner invitations which in turn might mean entry into important houses" and when women "could collect useful information about the social network."[99] Afternoon dresses were more structured than morning dresses and were often unique in shape depending on the designer. They were typically made of muslin or cotton and had long sleeves and high necklines to complement an elaborate hat.[100]

Luncheon, and the later afternoon meal called 'tea,' acted as a supplement to morning calls. Luncheon could occur at someone's house, but according to *The Gentlewoman,* "it is, however, the fashion in these days for the highest society to show itself more in public than was the case generations ago" and it was much more common to eat at a hotel or restaurant in the fashionable West End neighborhood of London.[101] While a luncheon's dress code was similar to that required for afternoon calls due to its public nature, tea was almost exclusively taken at home amongst close friends and called for a looser fitting garment over a looser corset or no corset at all; it was a time a woman to let her guard down and gear up for an evening of social activity. If a woman had no afternoon calls to undertake, she might skip afternoon dress and change straight into her tea gown from her morning garments. Regardless of the level of familiarity with her guests, a woman's tea

[98] Young and unmarried men also paid their calls on Sundays. This practice was sometimes called 'sowing seeds' alluding to the potential for further development of the relationship at other events. For more see Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 43-44.
[99] Ibid, 44.
[100] Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion,* 51; "The Cost of the London Season," 551.
[101] "A Famous Home of Rank and Fashion," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 524.

gown was highly decorated and was meant to show wealth and luxury.[102] In the Edwardian era, when men more commonly kept "business hours," tea was almost exclusively a women's event.[103] Dressing appropriately to attend all of these less formal social events helped maintain a woman's social status and improved her chances of receiving an invitation to a more prestigious event.

Figure 10: A tea gown by Jacques Doucet from 1907. It is highly decorated with delicate lace but is looser around the waist and shoulders. (The Met)

Jewelry, like clothing, was required to be in 'good taste' and match the level of splendor surrounding the woman. As explained in an article in the 1907 London Season edition of *The Gentlewoman*, "she seeks not to dazzle, but to appear in quiet, good taste … Pretty blouse pins in the same metal with accented points in enamel, opal, or pearl form elegant fasteners to her morning dress."[104] The same article notes that, if attending a more formal event in the afternoon, perhaps a "bridge party," she might break out diamond or emerald rings. In short, the most important measure of "taste" in jewelry was if it appropriately matched the formality of a woman's surroundings.

Dinner, the next event in a woman's day, was considered the most important event for making good impressions and sparking connections between young people. According to *Fifty Years of London Society,* "the majority of people seldom dine at home in the season unless they

[102] Some common fabrics and styles of teagowns, along with photos of extant garments can be found in Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion*, 50.
[103] For more on the transition of business hours for men, see Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 36.
[104] "What to Wear in Jewellery," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907): 556.

Figure 11: An evening dress design from 1901 by Ernest Raudnitz heavily decorated with sequins, ruffles and applique leaves. (V&A)

are entertaining friends."[105] Like introductions, invitations to dinner existed in a strict hierarchical system, and, in the Victorian era, were usually written at least two weeks before the event. The introduction of the telephone in the Edwardian era, as previously noted by Mrs. George Cornwallis West, began to supplant written invitations.[106] But regardless of the method of invitation, evening dress was required to be more formal than afternoon dress. Evening dresses were made of more luxurious fabrics like silk and chiffon and featured elaborate decoration, often including materials that reflected light. Mid-length or short sleeves and low-cut necklines were also expected for evening events.[107] For debutantes and young women, dinner parties were an opportunity to talk with adults outside their family and make connections with other young people. For many young women, the people of their age that they met at these events would often become lifelong friends. If a woman's friends ended up making advantageous marriages themselves, then they could help secure better prospects for her eventual children. Needless to say, making a

Figure 12: A debutante's evening dress from 1905. Note the light-colored fabric and delicate use of flowers and chiffon to help show her status as a debutante. (The Met)

[105] *Fifty Years of London Society*, 59.
[106] Mrs. Cornwallis West, "Social London: Past and Present. Part II," *The Gentlewoman* XXXIV, no. 881 (May 25, 1907): 18.
[107] Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion*, 51.

good impression and solidifying family connections at dinner parties was another way a young woman could improve her value on the marriage market.

Balls, which could occur up to several times weekly, required ballgowns and a display of the family's best jewelry. Ball gowns were full-length with a slight train, had off-the-shoulder necklines and lacy, almost nonexistent sleeves. Chiffon, silk flower decorations, and elaborate embroidery helped secure the ball gown as the Edwardians' most luxurious outfit. According to *The Gentlewoman,* "after Court dress, ball gowns form the most expensive item, especially for a girl who dances a great deal, and whose clothes in consequence want a great deal of renovating."[108] Ball gowns were also sometimes accompanied by a *sortie de bal* or an "opera cloak" to cover young ladies as they entered or left the venue. Debutantes wore lighter colors and used simple jewelry to broadcast their marital position. A full Parure (set) of matching heirloom pieces was only worn by married women for the grandest events such as royal balls or coronations. The jewelry was passed down from mother to eldest son and worn by his wife and it was common for each generation to alter the jewelry to match the latest style.[109] Young debutantes, not yet in possession of a Parure, wore simple jewelry and light-colored, "delicately feminine" dresses that advertised not only their

Figure 13: A debutante in her ball gown designed by the Ney Sisters shown in a 1905 edition of The Sphere. *The caption noted the use of tulle, Venetian lace sleeves, and a sky-blue satin belt. (HathiTrust)*

[108] "The Cost of the London Season," 552.
[109] A parure consisted of a tiara, large matching necklace, a hair ornament, elaborate matching earrings, and bracelets. Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion*, 56.

status among women, but their availability as a marriage prospect. This was duly noted both by older women playing matchmaker, but also by young men who, in the Edwardian era, began to attend and dance at balls more regularly.

With the more widespread introduction of motor cars in the early Edwardian era, travel became easier and faster, and many young people took advantage of this convenience to venture farther afield. Women, to protect their dresses from oil, wind, and rain, wore 'dusters,' also called tourist coats, dust-cloaks or dust-coats, made of an easily washable linen or cloth on their drives. These coats were invented in the mid-Victorian era for train travel but were adapted throughout the years to follow the silhouette of women's clothing. Early iterations were more poncho-like and did not allow the woman to raise her arms very high. In the Edwardian era however, dusters became much more like modern coats and allowed for a broader range of motion due to the increased number of women drivers. Women also wore silk "motoring scarves" to protect their hairstyles.[110]

Figure 14: A dust-coat advertised in the 1907 Season edition of The Gentlewoman.

Many unmarried young women would go to visit the country houses of relatives or friends on long weekends for dinner parties, fancy-dress balls, hunting, shooting, sightseeing, or garden parties. According to some social commentators, marriage connections were more likely to happen in these more private dwellings than in the thick of London events.[111] By examining the experience of these women, and by looking

[110] "A Review of the Dress World," 600.

[111] According to the author of "Are Marriages Made in London?" from *The Gentlewoman* XXX, no. 771 (April 15, 1905), the short time that young women and men were allowed to be with each other at dinners and dances in London was not enough time to make a true connection. She posits that the country provides more opportunity and activities that women and men can attend together without raising suspicions of impropriety. She concludes by saying that even if marriage proposals happen during the Season in London, it is likely that the couple actually met at a country house before the Season began.

at their packing lists, we can get a sense of the amount of time and care put into dressing appropriately. Cynthia Asquith, a young English socialite who participated in the Season around 1909, noted,

> A large fraction of our time was spent in changing our clothes, particularly in the winter, when you came down to breakfast ready for church in your 'best dress,' made probably of velvet if you could afford it, or velveteen if you couldn't. After church you went into tweeds. You always changed again before tea, into a 'tea gown' if you possessed that special creation; the less affluent wore a summer day frock. However small your dress allowance, a different dinner dress for each night was considered necessary.[112]

Cynthia's packing list for a single weekend away included one set of "Sunday best," two tweed coats and skirts with appropriate shirts, three evening dresses, three garments suitable for tea, her best hat, other hats and caps for outdoor activities, riding habit, billycock hat (for riding), several pairs each of indoor and outdoor shoes, boots, gaiters, petticoats, shawls, scarves, and some ornamental hair combs and wreaths.[113] Shorter events, like the fancy dress balls that took place at larger venues outside London like Stafford House or Warwick Castle, also necessitated a large amount of luggage. As noted by Pullar, "the railway platform would be piled with mountains of roofed boxes, for changing was an occupation which occurred at least four times a day."[114] Maintaining good fashion sense, even when out of one's element, played into the aristocratic ideal of effortlessness cemented by Victorian etiquette. As the amount of travel increased during the Edwardian era, short visits to the country for balls, sporting events like Ascot and Newmarket, and for traditional holidays like Whitsuntide became more popular and the amount of time spent in London proper decreased.

Royal Ascot was perhaps the most important public social event of the Season. Occurring every year in August, securing tickets and admission to the Royal enclosure was one of the best

[112] Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion*, 60; Cynthia was the daughter-in-law of the British Prime Minister H.H. Asquith (1852-1928), a writer, and J.M. Barrie's secretary.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Pullar, *Gilded Butterflies*, 149.

ways to display wealth and status; the only way to gain admission was to be sponsored by someone who already had tickets. In the Edwardian era, Ascot lasted a week and most families rented out a house in nearby Windsor in order to easily attend the event and host parties in their rented accommodation.

Figure 15: An Ascot dress designed by Paquin from 1901. (V&A)

Dressing for Ascot was one of the highlights of the Season. Since the public was able to attend, and thereby take note of who was seated in the royal enclosure, most women used this event to display their most fashionable pieces. Most outfits were similar to formal afternoon dresses but were heavily trimmed so that they resembled eveningwear.[115] Each women required a different dress for each day, "except perhaps on the Friday, when sometimes a toilette that has appeared early in the week will pass muster."[116] If the debutante and her chaperone were lucky enough to be invited into the Royal enclosure, which was closer to the race track, they would also require dust cloaks to protect their clothes from flying dirt. For an economically minded family, the dresses worn at Ascot could be reused later in the summer for garden parties or other outdoor events.

[115] Davies-Strodder, Lister, and Taylor, *London Society Fashion,* 30.
[116] "The Cost of the London Season," 550.

Hats were the focal points of Ascot fashion. Unlike previous eras, there was no one stylish hat shape, but it was expected that one's hat would match one's dress either in color or decoration.[117] Popular decorations included chiffon, tulle, feathers and flowers. These hats would often be supported by 'bandeaus' covered with ribbons and flowers, and "full hairstyles, sometimes assisted by 'transformations' (false hairpieces) and a battery of long, decorative hat-pins conspired to create the illusion of hats floating upon the head rather than being worn."[118] Choosing a hat to wear was a ceremony in itself. Most milliners and stores had lavish display rooms with snacks and drinks available as women shopped, further demonstrating the importance of hat selection. As tempting as it was for women to go 'over the top' with their hat decoration, it was still expected that hats not take "originality beyond the empire of good taste."[119]

Figure 16: An afternoon dress most likely worn at an outdoor event like Ascot. Dress designed by Redfern, a London designer, and published in Les Modes*, a French fashion magazine, in July 1905.*

[117] Pritchard, "London and Paris Fashions," 414.
[118] Cumming, *The Visual History of Costume Accessories*, 127.
[119] "A Review of the Dress World," 600.

The most public formal event a young woman would ever participate in, her presentation at court, required an attractive, fashionable look. Most court gowns consisted of layers upon layers of fine white silk, a long trailing train, a long white veil, long white gloves, and a headdress, often containing an ostrich feather for decoration.[120] As explained in Maureen Montgomery's article "Female Rituals and the Politics of the New York Marriage Market in the Late Nineteenth Century," this drew attention to the young woman's change in status, but also coded her visually as one to keep an eye on.[121]

Figure 17: A debutante in full court dress in 1906 printed in The Best Circles *by Leonore Davidoff.*

Given the stakes, and her own inexperience, a young girl was not left on her own to determine her outfit. Presentation dresses were almost never bought 'off the rack' and required multiple planning meetings and fittings between the young girl, her mother or sponsor, and the designer. A young debutante's court outfit would go through many stages of planning and approval before seeing the outside of her house. Davidoff explains the scrutiny a debutante was under from her entire household: "on the day itself, when she was finally dressed and ready, the girl was

[120] Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 52.
[121] Montgomery, "Female Rituals," 54; The white court dress, often associated with virginity, was also historically an indicator of exclusivity. Before the end of the eighteenth century, only the wealthiest families could afford to wear white dresses; they would stain so easily that it was a waste of money to buy a dress with such a short lifespan. Improved production techniques in the late eighteenth century lowered their price. The color white has a longstanding association with wealth. Aristocratic Greek and Roman women wore white to set themselves apart from other women in society. For more about the history of white clothing and debutantes, see Richardson, *The Season*, 36.

admired by the whole household circle of relatives and servants whose differential approval added to her feeling of importance."[122]

Court presentations were observed incredibly closely by the hostesses of the Season through newspaper reports and Society gossip. Because this event often launched the Season in May, any girl showing promise at her presentation would be tapped for the most exclusive parties later that summer. The line between underdressing and overdressing for such an event was extremely thin and any whiff of 'trying too hard' could negatively affect a young debutante's marriage prospects. New debutantes lived in fear of committing a fashion faux pas yet were encouraged to stand out to impress the matriarchs of Society. One of the key purposes of the strict dress code imposed upon young debutantes throughout the season—that of being acceptably understated, yet lavish—was to fully advertise her market value, but still show that she was capable of being fashionable and therefore 'fit in' with Society norms. Young women put so much effort into looking understated that it became a skill in itself; a girl who overdid it was seen as a less-skilled potential member of Society. As stated in a modern, yet relevant study of debutante balls undertaken in Australia in 1993, "the 'natural' look is not one that comes 'naturally.'"[123]

Young women's families often shelled out a small fortune just for her court presentation dress, but the overall cost of participating in a London Season could be astronomical. And that was the point! In an extremely effective gatekeeping strategy, economizing during the Season was seen as unfashionable and could have a more detrimental effect on a young woman's social position than not participating at all. Ladies' magazines did not offer any cost-saving advice and encouraged spending on fashion and luxurious fabric for the sake of the Season at any cost:

[122] Ibid.
[123] Lyn Harrison, "'It's a Nice Day for a White Wedding': The Debutante Ball and Constructions of Femininity," *Feminism & Psychology* 7, no 4 (November 1, 1997): 512.

"economise if one must in the autumn, but spend in the spring-time and the summer-time, that are worthy of the dainty petticoats and dainty shoes, the lacey frock, the muslins, the taffetas, the voiles."[124] This expectation of expenditure was essentially a young woman's entrance fee to the Season. If it were clear that she had not spent enough, which could be easily detected through her fashion choices, she would not be successful in the marriage market.

In an article aimed at families considering participating in the Season, *The Gentlewoman* examines the total monetary cost of a single London Season to an average upper-class family living outside of London.[125] The article includes average prices for renting a house, mansion, hotel and car, as well as estimated prices for clothing, entertaining one's friends, attending the opera or theatre, and more. All estimated costs averaged, a three month London Season could cost a family around £1,000 (£120,000 in 2020) in addition to their regular expenses such as domestic staff wages, food, consumer goods, non-Season clothing, international travel, excursions, etc.[126] By far the most costly portion of the Season was clothing for the young debutante and her chaperone; at least £233 (£28,213 in 2020) for the debutante and at least £155 (£18,768 in 2020) for her chaperone.[127] For an average family within the upper class, or perhaps one that was on the cusp of middle and upper class, spending this amount would have seemed worthwhile if it meant their daughter had the opportunity to marry well.[128] If, as was extremely common, the family

[124] "A Review of the Dress World," 600.
[125] "The Cost of the London Season," 550.
[126] For comparison, the average *yearly* wage in 1908 of a lady's maid was between £10 and £20; £180,000 is $222,600.
[127] The most expensive item for a young debutante was her court dress and accessories which would run her about £30 (£3,600 in 2020). Combined, the other 15 dresses she would need for a Season cost about £150 (£18,000 in 2020). Additionally, a young woman's hats totaled about £27 (£3,200 in 2020), with hats for Ascot being the most expensive at £5 each. For more detail, see "The Cost of the London Season," 552.
[128] For a family at the lower end of the upper class, this could mean finding her a rich husband to support her after marriage. For a family at the higher end of the upper class, this could mean finding her a husband with a title to solidify her social rank.

participated in multiple Seasons, or if they had multiple daughters, the Season could be a constant drain on their finances, making an advantageous match all the more essential.

Keeping an expensive fashionable image in an effort to gain entry into Society for the purpose of maintaining one's wealth may seem like a frivolous insular cycle. So why should historians care about the spending habits and marriage rituals of Edwardian aristocrats? In addition to including a fascinating narrative of gendered power structures and social expectation, the Season greatly affected London's overall economy for hundreds of years. If not for the scores of upper-class families utilizing London's service industry, and the women enforcing strict fashion requirements and hosting expensive social events, the retail landscape of the city would have developed very differently. According to Richardson, the Season "launched the careers of fashionable dressmakers, hairdressers, makeup artists, designers, florists, and dancing masters. It created markets for women's magazines and gazettes that were the prototypes of today's fashion magazines. It provided steady work for painters, photographers, and musicians, and for the social secretaries who were the forerunners of publicists, the gatekeepers of today's social scene."[129] Increased consumption of London's goods and services by the aristocratic elite allowed for the expansion of retail to include products for consumers of all classes. Likewise, as the opera and theatre industry enjoyed increased patronage, it was able to expand to more audiences both inside and outside London. As *The Lady's Realm* magazine notes in 1909, the "gaieties of the Season occur at every price point."[130]

When considered in toto, the impact of an entire Season's worth of aristocratic expenditure amounted to enough activity to float some industries. In 1908, *The Gentlewoman* published an article that hoped for a "good" Season that would make up for the "bad" winter: "the shops have

[129] Richards, *The Season*, 174.
[130] Harold MacFarlane, "L: S: D of a London Season," *The Lady's Realm* XXVI (May-October 1909): 71.

had a very bad winter season; a good spurt of gaiety might pull them round again. On the other hand, a dull three months this summer would probably mean ruin to many. And as it is with the shops, the dressmakers, the florists, so is it with many other classes of the community. Much depends on a gay London Season."[131] The Season's spending typically began in March or April with the ordering of dresses, hats and accessories in the latest fashions. If, as is noted in the *Norfolk Eastern Weekly Leader*, the Season's weather was mild after a cold winter, "the demand for light summer gowns, hats, toques, and capes [would be] almost unprecedentedly large."[132] Once the Season started, total Society expenditures on various social events were enormous: £600,000 (£72 million in 2020) on theatres and concerts, £2,900 per minute of actual racing at Ascot, and £50,000 each at Henry Royal Regatta (rowing race) and the annual varsity cricket match between Oxford and Cambridge.[133] In 1908, Society collectively spent £2 million (£242 million in 2020) above its normal expenditures for the year on the London Season.[134]

The most important choice of a woman's life was her choice of husband. A good choice meant that her wealth was protected, she would be able to 'level-up' in Society, and that she would be, if not in love, at least happy with her new family. A successful debutante spent her Seasons searching for a husband with the aid of older Society women she met along the way. The tools in her arsenal—manners, taste, fashion, and connections—if used correctly, allowed her to gain entry to the best parts of the marriage market and hopefully, find her a 'happily ever after' that would bolster her status in Society.

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[131] "The Coming Season," *The Gentlewoman* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908): 554; In a specific example from 1894 in the *Hampshire / Portsmouth Telegraph*, "the less said about the season that has gone the better. It was disappointing, discouraging, unmistakably bad, and according to an article in the special autumn number of the Drapery World, a season that defied resuscitation, and refused to respond to the many-sided enterprise of the drapery trade."; "The 'New Woman' and the Season," *Hampshire/Portsmouth Telegraph,* October 20, 1894, 11.
[132] "The London Season," *The Eastern Weekly Leader,* August 3, 1895, 5.
[133] MacFarlane, "L: S: D of a London Season," 71.
[134] Ibid.

As young women shopped for Season outfits, they were exploring their new lives as adults. Attending parties, socializing in Hyde Park, crafting one-of-a-kind outfits, and making new friends were incredibly enjoyable experiences that young Edwardian women looked forward to for their entire childhoods. But simply purchasing and wearing the correct clothing to the right events was not enough secure them Society marriages. Wearing the fashions appropriately—toeing the fine line between standing out and blending in—demonstrated that they could embody the Edwardian ideals of Society womanhood (exhibiting good taste). It was the combination of these two displays, one material and one performative, that opened the door to further social advancement through marriage.

The Season was a microcosm of the matrimonial economy of the Edwardian upper class. By studying this small section of the population, to whom marriage and power mattered so much, we are able to understand the vast gendered power structures that existed in the early twentieth century. Society women held immense power over the marriage market by controlling access to events and facilitating meetings between eligible bachelors and interested debutantes. By reinforcing existing gender expectations as a way of weeding out unworthy entrants to the London social scene (including expectations related to fashion and style), Society women were able to keep the values of the upper-class intact. If committing a social faux pas or possessing an air of 'trying too hard,' were all that kept a family from making it into the upper-class marriage market—and therefore into upper-class society—then the gatekeepers of that system had power indeed.

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Figure 1: "Popular Bachelors in London Society." *The Gentlewoman: The Season Number* XXXII, no. 824 (April 21, 1906): 595.

Figure 2: "Leaders of London Society." *The Gentlewoman: The Season Number* XXXII, no. 824 (April 21, 1906): 538.

Figure 3: *The Gentlewoman: The Season Number* XXXVI, no. 929 (April 25, 1908).

Figure 4: "Coronet Corset Co." Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper 17 (1900): 44.

Figure 5: The Symington Collection. Image Leicestershire. Accessed May 5, 2020.

Figure 6: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Miss Julia P. Wightman, 1990. Accessed May 5, 2020.

Figure 7: Victoria and Albert Museum Online Archives. Fashion Plate. Accessed April 26, 2020.

Figure 8: Victoria and Albert Museum Department of Prints and Drawings and Department of Paintings Accessions 1957-1958. Color lithograph. 1901. London: HSMO, 1964. Accessed May 5, 2020.

Figure 9: Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Mrs. Frederick H. Prince, Jr., 1967. Accessed April 26, 2020.

Figure 10: Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Rodman A. Heeren, 1959. Accessed April 26, 2020.

Figure 11: Victoria and Albert Museum Department of Prints and Drawings and Department of Paintings Accessions 1957-1958. Color lithograph. 1901. London: HSMO, 1964. Accessed April 26, 2020.

Figure 12: Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Sarah G. Gardiner, 1941. Accessed April 26, 2020.

Figure 13: "Women's Sphere." *The Sphere*, May 20, 1905. HathiTrust.

Figure 14: *The Gentlewoman: The Season Number* XXXIV, no. 876 (April 20, 1907).

Figure 15: Victoria and Albert Museum Department of Prints and Drawings and Department of Paintings Accessions 1957-1958. Color lithograph. 1901. London: HMSO, 1964. Accessed April 26, 2020.

Figure 16: *Les Modes*, July 1905. HathiTrust. Accessed May 5, 2020.

Figure 17: Davidoff, Leonore. *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season*. London: Cresset Library, 1986.