CLASSICAL DRESS, 1801
From *The Ladies' Magazine*

Taste and Fashion

FROM THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
TO THE PRESENT DAY

by

James Laver

NEW AND REVISED EDITION

WITH A CHAPTER ON
FASHION AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR
AND
TWELVE NEW ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR

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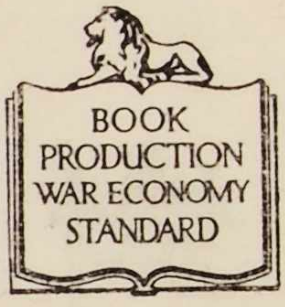

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PREFACE

SOME excuse may seem to be necessary for adding to the already considerable body of literature devoted to the history of costume. The bibliography of the subject is enormous, and some at least of the works included in it should spare those who concern themselves with women's dress from the charge of frivolity.

The present writer cannot remember when he was not fascinated by the history of dress, but he began his intensive study for a quite specialized and professional purpose—that of checking the dates of pictures by reference to changes in fashion. In order to do this he attempted to construct a portfolio of dated fashions, one for each year, at least as far back as the middle of the eighteenth century. He found that the late Mr Basil S. Long, of the Victoria and Albert Museum, had already assembled a very considerable number of dated portraits to aid him in his classification of miniature paintings. Such dated portraits, however, though valuable, are sometimes misleading, as it does not always follow that the costume worn by the sitter is the fashionable mode of the year in which the picture was painted. Older people, especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, are sometimes ten to fifteen years out of date. With younger people we are on safer ground, as they tend naturally to be painted in their newest clothes, and are more likely to be in the fashion.

On the other hand, fashion plates are sometimes equally misleading, for a fashion plate is very often rather what the designer of the costume hopes will be worn than what is actually to be seen in street or house or ballroom. Used together, fashion plates and dated portraits can, however, make the margin of possible error very narrow, and when illustrated journalism begins, about the eighteen-forties, this, as well as caricatures, can be used as a check. The immense value of *Punch* and similar journals (although there is no quite similar journal) is that the artists employed really do depict people as they are.

Armed with these three weapons of dated portraits, fashion

plates, and contemporary caricatures, the student has a very good chance of knowing what really was worn in any particular year. It should be possible for him to get together a hundred reproductions of dresses which will give him the essential line of each year's fashion.

This, however, is by no means as easy as it seems, and the difficulty increases as we approach our own time. Who shall say, by looking through the illustrated fashion plates of to-day, what is the typical dress of 1937? But, as if to reassure us, the typical dress of 1927 is already easy enough to find, for in retrospect the dresses of that period do seem to possess a unity of line quite unmistakable. It is impossible to fail to recognize the dress of 1880 or of 1830; it is impossible to mistake the bustle of 1873 for the bustle of 1885.

There is, however, a further complication. Most of those who have attempted to provide the public with a chronological series of reproductions of dresses have failed to distinguish between the different kinds of dresses. It is misleading in the extreme to compare a day dress of one year with an evening dress of another. If the material is to be assembled in any kind of scientific fashion evening dresses must be extracted from the main file and put into a sequence of their own. They form, indeed, a separate subject, and the present author has endeavoured to meet the difficulty involved by providing a special chapter on the theory of *décolletage*.

As the century progresses the student is faced with the further difficulty of the increasing number of categories into which dresses fall—in particular, with the increase of the number of sports clothes and dresses for various kinds of vigorous occupations. Sports clothes, however, tend in the end to stereotype themselves, and so cease to have any influence on fashion. Men's dress also tends to the stereotype, and lies outside the main theme of development: hence the special chapters on sports clothes and men's wear.

It was also found desirable to have separate chapters on corsets (for without an understanding of the foundation on which the dress is based there can be no real comprehension of the dress itself), on colours and materials, and on such a specialized aspect of fashion as the use of fur.

This work therefore falls into two halves: the first chronological in arrangement and dealing with main tendencies; the second divided into subjects, each of which is pursued through the whole hundred and fifty years of its development. It is hoped that this arrangement will make for clarity. The first half deals with backgrounds and influences; its main trend is sociological. The present writer has refrained, albeit often with difficulty, from being tempted down those fascinating byways of social history which so many former writers on costume have found irresistible. Descriptions of the *bals publics* of the Directoire, of the private lives of Napoleon's sisters, of the meteoric careers of Lola Montez and Cora Pearl, can be found elsewhere. But he has tried to give the successive changes in dress their proper *mise en scène* and in the last chapter has striven to develop a theory of their connexion with changes in taste in interior decoration and in architecture. He can only hope that this present book may throw some light on such changes, and may help to provide a clue through the labyrinth of taste and fashion during the last hundred and fifty years.

J. L.

NOTE TO THE NEW EDITION

SEVEN years have elapsed since *Taste and Fashion* was first published, and it was thought undesirable—since the original edition is now exhausted—to reprint the book without such modifications as more mature consideration might advise or the flight of time dictate. A thorough revision of the text has therefore been carried out, and, in order to bring the book up to date, a new chapter has been added. This new chapter is concerned with "Fashion and the Second World War," and, although no attempt is made to be dogmatic, the main lines of development are laid down, and certain prophecies hazarded. It is hoped that this final chapter will prove of interest even to those who may disagree with its conclusions.

The illustrations, especially the composite ones, built up of contrasted or related types, proved a popular feature of the first edition. These have now been added to by careful selection from many thousands of magazine cuttings, and from other sources. The colour plates are entirely new and have been specially chosen not only for their illustrative value, but for their decorative effect.

J. L.

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Chapter I

BACK TO NATURE AND THE GREEKS

THERE is something arbitrary, no doubt, in choosing 1789 as the starting-point for a book on modern costume. There is an element of artificiality in all such limits to periods; for there is no magic in a century as such, and all ages are ages of transition. Historical periods neither begin nor end abruptly. The influences which were to shape the French Revolution had been at work for the greater part of the reign of Louis XVI; simplification had already set in. On the other hand, the main features of eighteenth-century dress still persisted—at least, until the fall of Robespierre.

Yet if we bear these facts in mind there is little harm and much convenience in being able to commence our survey at a definite point. The rise of the river may be difficult to detect, but there is an instant when it overflows its banks; the tide ebbs almost imperceptibly, but there is a moment when the boat grounds upon the shingle and remains embedded. There is much to be said for the view that the eighteenth century ended not in 1800, but in 1789.

In retrospect there seems to be a curious unity in eighteenth-century costume. Theatrical costumiers, at all events, have rarely bothered to distinguish the changes of style which took place between Queen Anne and George III. In actual fact there were very considerable modifications; but it is permissible to hold that the general outline of both male and female costume remained very much the same throughout this period. We all know what this general outline was: for men knee-breeches, stockings, buckled shoes, a waistcoat—very long at the beginning of the century, and growing steadily shorter—a full coat, reaching down to the knees and flaring out at the bottom into a somewhat wide arc; a white, soft linen shirt adorned with lace at cuffs and neck; and, most characteristic of all, a three-cornered hat perched on

the top of a wig which, of abnormal size in 1700, grew gradually smaller as the century proceeded. This typical eighteenth-century male costume was largely a French creation, but it was worn almost universally throughout Europe. It was the mark of civilized life.

Female costume shows considerably greater variation, but the main features are very much the same throughout the period. Even when it is not supported by panniers the skirt is full, and it is nearly always opened down the front to show an elaborately embroidered underskirt. The bodice is stiff, the corset being in general built into the dress and laced quite openly down the front. The neck is square-cut and low, the exposed part of the bosom and the throat being protected, if need be, by a *fichu*; the sleeves come just below the elbow. The hair is sometimes dressed close to the head, as in 1750, or is built up on towering structures of wire and padding, as in the seventeen-seventies. It is often powdered, and, in spite of the variations of the headdress, it has the same artificiality as men's wigs during the same period.

Nothing can excuse the jumble of styles too often seen in revivals of the eighteenth-century plays: yet there is none the less a recognizable eighteenth-century costume, both for men and women, and there seemed little reason up to about 1780 why clothes should ever vary beyond very narrowly prescribed limits. It was the recognized costume of the French aristocracy, essentially urban, sophisticated, and artificial, imposing its taste upon the whole of the civilized world; it was the costume of the salon, the uniform of a Court; at its most characteristic it was elaborately embroidered and decorated: it was the dress of idleness and pleasure. Even those who could afford neither, who left out the embroidery and had their clothes made of more solid material, yet modified in very few particulars the general outline of eighteenth-century dress.

We have said that eighteenth-century dress was essentially urban in character, and up to the middle of the century at least an urban life seemed the only one worthy of a civilized person. That age-long process which in almost every European language has turned the words which signify a countryman into terms of

abuse was reaching its culmination: reaction was due. It is hardly necessary to describe such a reaction: it is sufficient to mention the name of Rousseau.

Rousseauism, the belief that civilization was essentially corrupt and that true virtue could only be found in rural life, quickly made its way into the most blasé circles of the French aristocracy. It led to a new, if still purely theoretical, admiration for the peasants. It gave rise to a new sentimentality. It induced even Marie-Antoinette to play at being a milkmaid, and was one of the main underlying currents of the French Revolutionary movement. But in England the same sentiment, or a healthier variety of it, had long been manifest. There had been no Richelieu to centralize English life, no Louis XIV to make even nobles feel that unless they were also courtiers they were of small account. In England, not the courtier, but the country gentleman was still the dominant type, and the English country gentry had already introduced certain modifications into the accepted form of eighteenth-century costume.

To the French *philosophes*, who prepared the way for the Revolution, there was much to admire in English life: its liberty, its comparative lack of privilege, and, above all, its simplicity. And so it came about that when Frenchmen wished to discard the livery of the salon they tended to adopt quite naturally the costume of the English country gentleman. The Englishman's coat was plain, so theirs became plain also. The Englishman, with his passion for riding, had found the full skirt of the eighteenth-century coat incommodious. He had cut away the front, and the square slice which he took out of his coat has had the curious fortune of being perpetuated to this day in men's evening dress. For riding the three-cornered hat was not very convenient: its wide brim caught the wind, and the shallowness of its crown made it useless as a shock helmet in case of a fall. The English country gentleman therefore decreased the size of the brim until it disappeared almost altogether, and he raised the height of the crown. Little more was needed to transform the tricorne of the eighteenth century into the top-hat of the nineteenth. The abandonment of breeches and the adoption of trousers lay still some years in the future, and the

change had obviously no connexion with the riding costume of the English country gentleman.

A recent writer[1] gives some curious details of the extent of French Anglomania under the Directoire and the Consulate. It had existed, he states, ever since Horace Walpole's visit to Mme du Deffand, but its expansion was due, after the fall of Robespierre, partly to the impulse towards country life we have been discussing, and partly, as M. Sinmare says with justice, to the fact that many French modistes must have fled to England during the Revolution and, returning thence, brought with them a picture of English fashion. More important still, they brought an enthusiasm for the excellent English cloth and for well-made boots.

It became for a time the fashion in Paris to drink punch, or even tea at five o'clock, or to lead on a string the traditional English bulldog. The famous Mlle Bertin made her establishment a centre for the imitation of English modes, especially English shawls and spencers, the shape of the latter coat being due, it is said, to the fact that the eccentric Lord Spencer had once burned his coat-tails while standing in front of the fire, had had them trimmed neatly by his tailor, and had gone out into the street in this fashion. It is interesting to note that the imitation of things English went so far as to lead to the dropping of the rolled 'r' in conversation, almost to its omission altogether, as in many English words. English carriages and vehicles of all kinds had been much admired by the *émigrés*, and their return introduced the mode into Paris. Real elegants abandoned the French cabriolet for the tilbury, the sulky, the buggy, or the whisky. English horses were imported, both as carriage horses and for riding, and for a while the rigid English manner of sitting in the saddle was preferred to the more easy French seat. M. Sinmare even attributes the multiplication of restaurants, which had been unknown in Paris before the Revolution, to an imitation of the English mode of eating in taverns. It really seems as if in the eyes of the men of the Directoire period the English could do no wrong. But this changed for a time at the advent of Napoleon.

Admiration for the English, however, was but a small part of

[1] Pierre Sinmare, "La Mode et l'Anglomanie," in *Œuvres libres*, 1936, No. 185.

MME TALLIEN IN GRECIAN ROBES
Jacques-Louis David
By courtesy of Frank T. Sabin, Bond Street, London

The Graces in a High Wind
Etching by J. Gillray, 1810

A Windy Corner (detail)
Lithograph after W. H. W., 1864

the impulse which was to change French costume so radically in the closing years of the eighteenth century. *Anglomanie* was overshadowed by *anticomanie*. Admirable as country life might be, the life of the men of the Revolution lay in the town, or rather in the city, considered as a political entity. They were, indeed, obsessed with the idea of the city: they called one another 'citizens,' and they looked back for their models to the city states of ancient Greece, and to that city which was so much more than a city state, and yet in its essence was never anything else—ancient Rome. The Greek democracies and republican Rome seemed to the men of the Revolution the ideal model on which to base their new policy. It was not surprising, therefore, that a quite uncritical admiration for Greeks and Romans should give rise to an attempt to imitate them in all things, even in dress.

The attempt to do so for men ended in failure. Neither the Greek tunic nor the Roman toga was at all suitable for life in eighteenth-century Paris, and it is one of the paradoxes of the Revolutionary scene that the would-be Greeks and Romans attired themselves, as we have already noted, not as Roman senators or as Greek philosophers, but as English country gentlemen.

With women's dress, however, it is a very different story. It is one of the fundamental principles of fashion that women's dress is much more susceptible to dominant tastes and ideas than the dress of men. The dress of women is modified much more easily: it shows much less tendency to stereotype itself into a uniform—a tendency which is the most striking characteristic of male dress throughout the ages. Also, women are willing to put up with much more inconvenience in order to be in the fashion, and they do not in general lead such strenuous lives, so that the question of mere suitability is less insistent. We might expect to find, therefore, that the neo-classical enthusiasm of the Revolutionary period should find an echo in female dress, and that this is true is obvious enough from any study of the costume of the period.

The effects we have noted, however, were not immediately apparent. Throughout the period of the Revolution up to the death of Robespierre feminine dress followed the lines of the years immediately before the Revolution. There was, indeed, more

simplicity, not only on account of economic conditions, but because it was positively dangerous to be seen in the street in fine clothes; the essential lines were the same, however, as those which had ruled immediately before 1789. But the problem is more profound than this: while what might be called the 'current idea' determines the form which fashion shall take, the actual impulse to change lies elsewhere. It lies, as we have tried to demonstrate in a later chapter of this book, in the desire to please, or, to put it more brutally, the impulse is based on seduction. This impulse, while never extinguished, is dormant in times of great political crisis, and only emerges into full view when the crisis is over and people feel once more free to enjoy themselves. Therefore the revival of Greek fashions, or versions of what were supposed to be Greek fashions, was fully manifest only with the end of the Terror and the establishment of the Directoire.

It was yet another paradox in this most paradoxical of human problems that people only began to adopt the costume of the ancient world when the ideals of Republican virtue had been abandoned for the frank pursuit of pleasure. The frivolity which the Republicans thought they had extinguished for ever with the blood of aristocrats burst forth with renewed intensity once the threat of the guillotine was removed.

The Directoire is a most interesting and instructive period, especially to those, like ourselves, who have recently passed through somewhat similar crises. Like causes produce like effects, and the nineteen-twenties have many points of resemblance with the years between 1795 and 1800. In both periods women found themselves suddenly emancipated, and their first action was to cut their hair short and to take off most of their clothes. Both ages saw the rise of dance mania.

Dance mania seems to be a universal result of great catastrophes. There was an astonishing outbreak after the devastation of the Black Death in the fourteenth century, when whole villages went dancing mad. There was another example in Germany in the sixteenth century. The dance mania which followed the conclusion of the war of 1914–18 is sufficiently recent to be remembered by almost everybody. The whole phenomenon awaits a

really scientific analysis, to which the anthropologist as well as the historian might make a valuable contribution. It is sufficient to note here that dance mania was never more widespread (except perhaps in 1920) than it was in the years following the end of the Terror.

Here we must distinguish. The prevalence of private balls does not constitute dance mania. The essence of dance mania is that the dancing shall be public, that anyone shall be admitted who has the power to pay. It is therefore particularly noticeable in a period when social upheaval has thrown open the doors of pleasure to the new class of *nouveaux riches*. The *bals publics* of the Directoire were innumerable, and they had a profound influence on costume, not only by the thirst for pleasure which they represented, but by providing a platform, a shop-window, as it were, for the launching of new fashions. A fine dress was no longer something to be worn at Court or at select private assemblies: it was something to be worn in the most public manner possible. All the checks which Court etiquette or mere good taste imposed were suddenly removed, and therefore the natural tendency of fashion to push itself to extremes was intensified, and the seduction impulse which lies at the back of all change in women's dress was displayed in all its nakedness.

The enthusiasm for things theatrical was used as an excuse to expose more of the female form to the public gaze than has ever happened since, even in the modern period. Single garments of diaphanous materials replaced the elaborate panniers and stomachers of a former age. Dresses were split up the sides, to the knee and beyond, and revealed limbs clothed in flesh-coloured tights, or sometimes not clothed at all. Dresses were cut very low at the neck, and although a few daring spirits, who went so far as to expose the breasts, were hissed in the street, the costume of the majority of women was not very much more prudish. What the somewhat puritanical Sébastien Mercier in his *Nouveau Tableau de Paris* calls "*les réservoirs de la maternité*" were the undoubted focal points of interest during the whole of the period, just as legs were during the nineteen-twenties.

Legs were not entirely invisible under the Directoire. As we

have seen, they could sometimes be glimpsed through the slits in the side of the robe or through the transparency of the actual material; but it was also the fashion to walk in the street with one side of the dress gathered in the hand. On the feet were flat-heeled slippers, sometimes cross-gartered up the leg. The hair was short and dressed *à la Titus* or *à la victime*. The very name of the last is a sufficient indication of the frivolity of the period. There was even a Bal des Victimes in the Hotel Richelieu, where it was fashionable to wear the hair cut short at the nape of the neck in imitation of the preparations for the guillotine. At the Bal it was customary to salute one's friends with a sharp movement of the head, as of one laying it upon the block, and some of the women went so far as to have a thin red ribbon tied round their necks to imitate the cut of the knife.

Since the Assembly had voted the restitution of goods confiscated during the Revolution some young aristocrats found themselves very much better off than they would have been if their fathers had lived, and they formed the nucleus of a wild and extravagant society, animated by a sensuality as imperious as that of the *ancien régime* and much less refined. Politeness fell out of use, as it always does in times of feminine emancipation. The old aristocratic prejudices were discarded, especially the one against making money by trade—or rather by finance, for speculation was universal. The Palais-Royal was a bourse by day and a place of rendezvous by night. Under its arcades cafés alternated with gambling hells and brothels. If the whole of Paris seemed given over to the more violent forms of pleasure, Barras was scarcely the man to offer either a better example or a restraining hand. That was to be the work of the little man on whom Barras had contemptuously palmed off his discarded mistress.

Through this feverish Paris crowded and jostled a vast assemblage of men and women who seemed to have decided to pass the greater part of their lives in the open streets. The women dressed as we have been describing; the men in the *Incroyable* costume—the last costume of fantasy to be worn by the male sex before it settled down for a century into its modified version of English country clothes.

The *Incroyable* wore the same kind of clothes as his neighbours, but with the difference of lighter materials and more violent colours, stripes everywhere, extending even to the stockings, the tails of the riding-coat incredibly elongated so that they almost touched the ground, the waistcoat so diminished that it scarcely covered the chest, the neck-cloth so exaggerated that it concealed the chin and made all men look as if they were suffering from goitre, the hair unpowdered and wildly dishevelled, the hat neither the tricorne of the previous age nor the top-hat of the future, but a kind of crescent moon, of huge dimensions—such a headgear as might be made by folding a wide-brimmed hat in two and crushing it under the wheels of a passing car. Hats of this kind, much reduced in size, persisted as a part of evening dress well into the following century. They were worn by some of Napoleon's generals. They are not altogether unrelated to the cocked hat of modern diplomatic usage, but their glory in the street was short-lived. They passed with the *Incroyables*.

Women's dress showed little modification in essential lines till almost the end of the Empire, but certain changes may be noted. Dresses were universally white, because the dresses of the ancient Greeks and Romans had been white. The success of Gérard's *Psyché* made faces white also. Women gave up rouge and began to cultivate an interesting pallor. At first women wore very little jewellery of any kind, but the successes of Napoleon in Italy introduced a fashion for antique cameos. This, however, was after all part of the general neo-classical enthusiasm. His expedition to Egypt introduced a new note, which was ultimately to sweep away the old classicism altogether.

Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, although it failed in its object and nearly ended in disaster, made a profound impression upon the French mind. It brought the discovery of a new exoticism, a country of the imagination yet unexplored, and hieroglyphics and Sphinx's heads soon mingled with the old classical *motifs* in interior decoration and in jewellery. Antique cameos were succeeded by scarabs and reproductions of the Egyptian funerary figures; but the scholarship necessary for the understanding of ancient Egyptian art was lacking, and so the Egyptian mania

tended to merge into a revived Orientalism, an enthusiasm for the things of the Near East. Turbans began to make their appearance as female headdresses, and lasted, as was natural enough, well into the Romantic period.

The Oriental enthusiasm also brought in a vogue for shawls. Napoleon's ships had brought back with them from Egypt a quantity of new materials, and Josephine was one of the first to use them. Indian shawls, especially cashmeres, soon became the rage, to such an extent, indeed, that a whole manufacture of imitations of such articles sprang up in the neighbourhood of Paris, and these manufactures were still further stimulated by the war with England, which cut off supplies from the East. The shawl became an indispensable article of toilet for every fashionable woman, and must have proved extremely welcome as an addition to a dress which provided such inadequate protection both against rain and cold.

Shawls were of every kind of material—of cloth, of serge, of knitted silk, and even of rabbit's fur—and of all colours—red, blue, Egyptian earth colours—or embroidered with flowers and leaves. They were worn with their ends floating in the wind or crossed over the breast. They were, however, not the only means of protection against the inclemencies of a northern climate: jackets of various kinds became the mode, especially the so-called spencers or tailless coats, which were generally of dark cloth, with very small revers and a round collar. The military triumphs of the Empire brought in all kinds of garments adapted from soldiers' uniforms, and an interesting special study could be made of the transplanting of hussars' froggings, lanyards, epaulettes, etc., to feminine costume. Military fashions also had a considerable influence on headgear, with adaptations of the Polish cap and the like. Napoleon's marshals were permitted to design their own uniforms, and it would have been strange if women, who enjoyed an even larger licence, should not have produced some striking fantasies of their own.

Even Englishwomen were influenced during the long war with Napoleon to experiment with pseudo-military fashion. The Oriental impulse was even more strongly felt, not only in clothes

but in furniture, and, with a suitable time lag, in architecture also. France produced no such striking tribute to the Oriental fashion as the Pavilion at Brighton.

Englishwomen had never adopted the extremely daring fashions of the Directoire period: they were, none the less, profoundly influenced by what was taking place on the other side of the Channel, the more so as it was now much easier than it had been to get reliable information in a reasonable space of time. During the second half of the eighteenth century fashion news was supplied to outlying places like England through the medium of little dolls, dressed in the latest Parisian modes and exported for purposes of copying. A great number of the dolls which have come down to us from the eighteenth century were not children's toys at all, but sample *toilettes*; but this was at best a somewhat clumsy method of procedure. The invention of the fashion plate made everything much easier, and when we consider that during the troubles of the Revolution many French dressmakers and milliners took refuge in London it is not surprising that the empire of French fashion was more firmly established than ever. With the exception of one gap of twelve years it may be said that from the end of the eighteenth century French female fashion governed the world, including England.

This gap, from the Peace of Amiens in 1802 to 1814, is a very curious one, and led to a strange divergence of French and English fashion. It is only necessary to examine the fashion plates of both countries—for England too was producing fashion plates at the beginning of the nineteenth century—to realize this divergence very completely. It is a curious fact that by 1812 the English had abandoned the high waist and had begun to wear corsets again, the true corset only being possible when the waist is normal. The results were not very happy, and when Englishwomen flocked over to Paris after the first abdication of Napoleon they found themselves figures of ridicule. Both corsets and normal waists were immediately abandoned, and did not reappear again for another six years. There was no other fundamental divergence between French and English female fashion till 1840.

As concerns male fashion, the influence, however, runs in an

opposite direction. We have seen that the men of the Revolution adopted a modified version of English country costume, and no amount of political antagonism seemed to be able to alter this. Apart from uniforms and ceremonial dresses, the male costume which had established itself by the opening years of the nineteenth century consisted of top-hat, cutaway coat, breeches, and riding-boots, the breeches not ending at the knee (like those of the eighteenth century), but running down into the boots, which might either be Hessians or boots with turnover tops like those worn by modern jockeys. For more formal dress knee-breeches of the old pattern were still considered good form, although it was possible to wear instead tight-fitting pantaloons. Loose trousers were still only worn by sailors and the lower classes.

Such a dress, generally made of fairly sombre material, or at least not embroidered as the coats of the eighteenth century had been, required, in order to look well on its wearers, one thing—fit. It is only necessary to examine some of the actual garments which have come down to us to become convinced that the eighteenth-century coat never fitted in the modern sense at all. It was a long time before tailors became sufficiently skilful to give a coat revers or a collar. Such things, if they were to keep in place at all, needed a very considerable skill in cutting, and the French, despite all their triumphs in dressmaking, have never been conspicuous for their skill as *tailleurs*. The English tailors, who had been for some years accustomed to deal with a much heavier kind of cloth than their French *confrères*, were much more skilful. By the opening years of the century they had established their pre-eminence, which they have held ever since. So far as men's clothes were concerned the nineteenth century belonged to the English.

This pre-eminence was given its *cachet* by the rise of the dandies in the time of the Regency. Brummell was in many ways a vulgar and shallow fellow, but his theory of dandyism was impeccable. The well-dressed man, he taught, should never be conspicuous by his clothes; he should wear no strong colours, no patterning of any kind; the material of which his coat was made should be sombre in hue, but very good to the eye of the connoisseur; the fit should be perfect and follow the natural line of the body. Brum-

mell himself was so particular about fit that he had his coat made by one tailor, his breeches by another, his waistcoats by a third. The breeches sometimes fitted so closely that it was impossible to sit down in them, and the caricaturist of the day loved to depict the dandy in his early morning struggles to get into his clothes. The only part of the costume where fantasy was allowed was in the arrangement of the neck-cloth. Brummell invented several arrangements himself, and is said to have discarded a dozen failures every morning before he was satisfied. Linen, he taught, should not be too elaborately frilled, but it must be immaculate. We often forget that the eighteenth century, for all its fine clothes and its lace at wrist and neck, was an eminently dirty century, and we have to thank Brummell at least for this, that he enforced, if he did not actually invent, personal cleanliness. The legend of the Englishman's morning tub goes back no farther than the days of the Regency. Brummell was very particular also about his boots, and to have these properly polished became henceforward one of the marks of the well-dressed man. There had been fine clothes before, but the word 'dandy' was an English word, and dandyism was essentially an English thing, the prestige of which extended far beyond the country of its origin.

So it happened that when the two nations, France and England, came together again after the final fall of Napoleon English-women eagerly adopted French fashions, and Frenchmen, so far as in them lay, adopted English fashions. The main outline of the latter is obvious enough. The former had already departed from the classical line inaugurated after the Revolution, for women had begun to adopt those pointed lace accessories at neck and throat so characteristic of the Restoration. But these, with their harking back to former periods of French history, and especially to the last days of the Valois, form part of the general Romantic reaction which must be considered in the next chapter.

Chapter II

PRUDERY AND ROMANTICISM

We have seen that after 1814 French feminine modes reigned supreme throughout Europe; but French modes were very different from those which had prevailed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. No doubt the French aristocrats and *émigrés* who returned to the land of their fathers with Louis XVIII were mistaken in believing that they could put back the clock to the privileged days before the Revolution. There is no putting back of clocks. But their historical sentiment was shared by others besides themselves—by the entire nation, in fact, except for the fanatical Bonapartists. Men's thoughts no longer strayed back to the classics, to an imaginary Greece and an idealized Rome. Instead they wandered backward into French history. Paradoxically enough, the return of the Bourbons gave rise to a new sentiment of nationalism—not the aggressive nationalism with an international mission which Napoleon had stood for, but a self-centred nationalism, content to be French and to turn back to the old traditions. A new historical romanticism was born, and it was because Charles X mistook this romanticism for personal loyalty that he lost his throne.

Strangely enough, French aspirations in the age of the Restoration did not turn back, as they might have been expected to do, to the great age of French monarchy, to the period of the Grand Monarque, Louis XIV. Perhaps there was in Louis XIV something too similar to the dethroned Napoleon. Instead they turned to an earlier age, the age of the Valois. There was nothing particularly admirable about the Valois, but what exquisite costumes they had worn! What magnificently puffed sleeves! What fantastically exaggerated ruffs! What a splendid source of inspiration for new fashions!

It is easy to believe that this somewhat arbitrary choice of the second half of the sixteenth century as an inspiration for future

development was due to a very large extent to literary influences. It is odd to reflect how completely Mary Queen of Scots seems to have dominated the thoughts of the dress-designers in the ten years following the defeat of Napoleon. Everything was suddenly *à la Marie Stuart*, and in the opinion of the present writer the reason for this is quite a simple one. Schiller's *Maria Stuart* was written in 1800.

In spite of Mme de Staël the influence of Germany was in abeyance as long as the Empire lasted. But with the removal of Napoleon German influences were free to penetrate. The French public discovered Schiller, as well it might with its sudden self-consciousness about French history. Had not the German poet written a play about Jeanne d'Arc? And if he had written another about Marie Stuart, was not Marie Stuart a French princess? As a fashion influence there could be no doubt which was likely to be the more powerful. Jeanne d'Arc had dressed as a man and spent most of her time in armour: Marie Stuart was intensely feminine with lace at wrist and throat. It is only necessary to glance at the fashion plates of the Restoration period to see how powerfully fashions were influenced by her example. The ruff became an *idée fixe*. While the ruff, or a modification of it, found its place even in evening *toilettes*, it was naturally more powerful in day dresses, and its influence was strongly reinforced by a new element which entered with the Restoration—the element of prudery. After Waterloo the whole of French society was in conscious or unconscious reaction against the libertinage of the Revolutionary period and even of the Empire. Though Napoleon had done his best to introduce a more moral tone into his immediate circle, the example people remembered was that of Josephine, and Josephine had never been a prude. Gone were the days when ladies thought it permissible to bare their bosoms in the public street, to walk about bare-throated, even in winter. Ruffs would have been an obvious absurdity above the low-cut gowns of the early years of the century. Now dresses rose to the throat, and a frill of lace seemed their obvious finish. Even evening dresses became slightly higher than they had been, and ladies began to make up for the shortness of their sleeves by wearing long white gloves, a custom

which persisted well into the twentieth century and is still *de rigueur* in Court circles. Indeed, it is interesting to reflect that the essentials of modern Court dress were established already in the early years of the nineteenth century. The plumes in the hair originated in the late seventeen-nineties, and the long white gloves after Waterloo.

The element of prudery of which we have spoken was seen also in the growing unwillingness to wear a single sheath-like garment revealing the lines of the figure. Petticoats began to be worn underneath, and increased in number towards the end of the second decade. For some years the waist remained high, as high as it had been during the most neo-classical days of the Empire, but the multiplication of petticoats made this an absurdity, for it caused the body to grow apparently wider immediately under the breasts, with an effect both ludicrous and ungraceful. It was inevitable that sooner or later the waist should descend to normal, and this happened at the beginning of the eighteen-twenties. The first examples are to be found in fashion plates in 1820, and the normal waist had become usual in 1822, except in remote provincial places.

Skirts were now free to expand, and this fact in its turn gave rise to certain inevitable developments of the mode; for the effect of wide skirts is to make the waist look narrower, and a slim waist was soon looked upon as desirable for its own sake. Corsets had already come back again, and now tight-lacing began in earnest. A normal waistline has always resulted in tight-lacing, except—for reasons which will be considered later—in the present age. Its progress in the twenties and thirties is easy to follow: it reached its highest pitch of exaggeration about the year 1833.

There is, however, apart from tight-lacing and voluminousness of skirts, another way of making waists look small, and that is by the exaggeration of the size of sleeves. The ordinary sleeve at the beginning of the twenties was, like the ruff, copied from the dress of the late sixteenth century—not, however, from the women's dress, but from the men's: the little puffed and slashed sleeves of our own Elizabethan costume. This in itself was a rigid historical form which it was difficult to modify very easily. The whole tendency

of dress, however, was to make sleeves larger, and this was accomplished in a most instructive fashion. In the late twenties it became the custom, while wearing the little puffed Elizabethan sleeve, to cover it with another sleeve of net, much more voluminous and reaching to the wrist. Its shape was largely dictated by its purpose: it had to be large at the shoulder in order to take in the puffed sleeve underneath, and it sloped away at the wrist in the shape of a leg of mutton. This was the origin of the *manches à gigot*, so typical of the next decade. The transparent net of this sleeve in its earliest manifestation shows a curious ingenuity, which was to be used again in our own time; for when the designers of the late nineteen-twenties wished to lengthen women's skirts they were compelled at first to cover them with a long net over-skirt, leaving the skirt underneath quite short. It was the gradual thickening of this over-skirt which gave us the long skirt of 1930.

To return, however, to the late eighteen-twenties: the transparent net sleeve was soon replaced by sleeves of a more opaque material but of a precisely similar shape, and once this shape had been established it tended, by the natural desire to make the waist look smaller, to grow ever larger and more voluminous, until it merged into the pure Romantic mode.

Romanticism was largely an affair of literature. We have noted the immense influence of Schiller's *Maria Stuart*; but the French soon became conscious of other writers dealing with historical themes, in particular Sir Walter Scott. *Waverley* had appeared in 1814, the very year of Napoleon's abdication. *Kenilworth*, which could only reinforce the Marie Stuart impulse, did not appear until 1821. But in between these two dates Scott had written numerous novels, including *Rob Roy*, *Montrose*, and *Ivanhoe*—all of which helped to swell the historical consciousness of the reading public both in England and in France. The rage for period costume, for frank fancy dress, became almost universal. Fancy-dress balls were never more popular than they were in the late twenties and early thirties, and their immense influence on contemporary dress cannot be doubted. The Duchesse de Berry, perhaps the most influential single figure in the costume of the period, took up the craze with enthusiasm. As early as 1820 she

had appeared at a ball dressed as a queen of the Middle Ages. In 1829 at a similar ball she wore the costume of a sixteenth-century queen. It is interesting to note that at the same function Lady Stuart of Rothesay, the wife of the British Ambassador, appeared as Marie Stuart. A *genre moyen âge* was launched, a reflection of the *style troubadour* in painting, and women appeared in the street in *robes à la châtelaine* without any sense of incongruity. We must not forget that in 1829 appeared Dumas' *Henri III et sa cour*, and this was quickly followed by the historical dramas of Victor Hugo. The influence on taste of both these writers was prodigious.

The influence of Chateaubriand was more general. His vindication of Christianity certainly turned men's thoughts to the pomps and splendours of the Middle Ages, but his eloquence was too vague to be used as the starting-point of a definite fashion. Yet even he produced his *cols Atala*. The classically minded Goethe would probably have been horrified to think of himself in any such connexion. Yet his *Faust* undoubtedly turned men's thoughts from the second to the first half of the sixteenth century, and they were led to explore all the fantasies of the German mode in the Reformation period. The famous *toque à créneaux* is nothing but the bonnet of the German *Lanzknecht*, and for a time it seems to have driven all other kinds of feminine headgear out of existence.

The immense vogue of Byronism after the death of the poet in 1824 led, in spite of his historical works, rather to the triumph of a revived Orientalism. During the early thirties turbans were worn again, but they were not the turbans of the Napoleonic age, but immense flat structures, following the general shape of the *toque à créneaux*. The main influence of Lord Byron, however, lay in the creation of that condition of romantic melancholy to which we must return later.

We have already spoken of the vogue of masked and costumed balls at the beginning of the eighteen-thirties. Critics were not slow in pointing out the absurdities which arose owing to the very inadequate notions of historical costume possessed by dressmakers. All styles were mixed up together, for in the eyes of most people of the period historical costume meant merely something with a slashed sleeve and a ruff. It was not long, however, before people

became conscious that even in the Middle Ages and during the sixteenth century fashions had changed, and that there was, in fact, a distinction between the dress of Charles V and that of Henri III. Excellent books of reproductions began to be issued, and great ladies even succeeded in getting prints lent to them from the Dépôt des Estampes, upon which they could model their dresses for fancy-dress balls. In the end there was something approaching historical accuracy, and this brought to an end the movement we have been considering, for when fancy dress becomes a true reconstruction of historical costume it ceases to have any influence upon contemporary fashion. It slips, as it were, into a pigeonhole of the mind instead of floating round as a mere influence. It is labelled, like an object in a museum; it is classified and dismissed. The influence of historical costume on contemporary dress may be said to end in the early thirties.

The influences, however, which created pseudo-historical dress were at work elsewhere, especially in the sphere of interior decoration. It is one of the theses of the present book, a thesis which will be found more fully developed in the penultimate chapter, that costume foreshadows the development of interior decoration, and that this in turn foreshadows the development of architecture. This was certainly true in the Romantic period. From the beginning of the reign of Charles V there had been hints of the Gothic impulse in interior decoration, but the real rage for medieval furniture dates from about 1830, and here again the immense influence of the Duchesse de Berry must be noted. Furniture lost its classical lines; chairs had Gothic backs, although they were not in the least like the chairs which had really existed during the medieval period; firescreens were made like stained-glass windowns; sideboards imitated rood-screens. Even book bindings grew Gothic.

The impulse was not slow in spreading to architecture. The *Flâneur Parisien* notes in 1834: "We have Gothic dining-rooms and Gothic parlours, and now people want the whole building to be Gothic, with dungeons, crenelations, castellations, drawbridges, and portcullises." The Manoir Beauchesne, built in the Bois de Boulogne in 1835, was as Gothic as contemporary knowledge could

make it. Under the influence of architects like Viollet-le-Duc Gothic churches and sixteenth-century manors sprang up all over France. In England we had Pugin, and we need go no farther for an example of neo-Gothic than the Houses of Parliament.

We must return, however, to the influence of Romanticism on dress. That influence, as we have seen, was largely historical, but it had another aspect, quite as important and even more interesting. Perhaps the two were, on analysis, only different versions of the same thing. The Romanticist looked back to former ages, and if he did so with such passion it was largely because he was dissatisfied with his own. Even when the desire to reach back in history had faded the *malaise* remained. We may laugh, in retrospect, at the *maladie d'un enfant du siècle*, but it was a malady which was universal. Byron regarded himself as a blighted being; but so did almost every other young man of sensibility in the early thirties. It is even more curious that women did so too. It was as if, after the orgies of the post-Revolutionary period, every one in the world had awakened with a headache. Frank paganism and robust health seemed to have vanished together. It is startling to note the number of girls who 'went into a decline' and died before they had reached womanhood. Some have suggested that the extraordinary prevalence of consumption during the Restoration period was due to the very inadequate clothing of the previous generation; but in the face of modern medical opinion it is hard to believe that anybody was ever much worse for wearing little. No, the invalidism of the Romantics was largely a matter of mentality. It was none the less frequently mortal, and this is perhaps the most astonishing thing about it.

Tight-lacing may be considered either as a cause or merely as a symptom of the prevailing tendency. Women began to suffer from perpetual migraine, to look pale and faint upon sofas at the slightest provocation. To be fat was almost a crime, and even to look healthy was something approaching a solecism. An ideal fragility was the prevailing mode, and to attain it women were willing to suffer martyrdom. To eat heartily was a mark of grossness, and to such an extreme was this idea carried that many

Morning Walking Dress, 1818

Morning Walking Dress, 1807

A Group of Waltzers, 1817
Engraving by J. Alais after J. H. A. Randal

women found it necessary to make a meal at home before going out to dine. It will be remembered that Byron at one time confined himself to a diet of potatoes sprinkled with vinegar. "How long will his lordship persist in his present diet?" asked one of his friends. "Just as long as you continue to notice it," returned another; and there was no doubt an element of ostentation in all such privations. Yet there were some—far too many—who took their vinegar-drinking in earnest. Schoolgirls in convents drank it in order to have a look of illness, to keep thin; they sat up all night reading to give themselves heavy eyes with black rings underneath them. Among fashionable ladies there was an enormous consumption of belladonna, a drug which dilated the pupils of the eyes and gave them a wild, fixed appearance. There was a rage for the Spanish type, black-haired and green as a lemon. So sallow was the prevailing complexion in 1835 that a memoirist of the period compares the contemporary beauties with the Chinese and Japanese. Some, both men and women, even made up with yellow pigment. Men strove to look pale and distinguished, as if ravaged by some secret sorrow; women to look frail and afflicted with a settled melancholy. It was as if universal lunacy had settled upon the fashionable world. The Byronic hero, with his cadaverous features and sarcastic smile, was to be seen everywhere, flanked by women with faces like alabaster, almost transparent, just rescued from the tomb and liable at any moment to return to it.

Barbey d'Aurevilly called Byron the "solar plexus" of the nineteenth century, and in the early thirties it seemed to be no less than the truth. Almost all the principal romantic writers were dark men with pale complexions. An element of fatalism seemed to be necessary to any kind of popular success. In all the pictures of the day we can see them with their morose expression and their high foreheads, sometimes made higher still by the plucking out of the hairs. So extraordinary can be the influence of one man of genius when his temper is mysteriously in tune with the spirit of the age.

The evolution of men's costume during the Romantic period was largely similar to that of women. Men too were influenced

by the vogue of fancy-dress balls, and some of them even wore medieval costumes in the street. Some wore pointed medieval shoes and strove to make their waistcoats look like doublets. The famous *gilet rouge* of Théophile Gautier was not a waistcoat at all —it was a doublet; but its influence was all the greater for that fact. Even when waistcoats were waistcoats they were generally red or of some red shade, and a violently coloured waistcoat of some kind was *de rigueur*. Any eccentricity was permissible if it enabled men to break away from the *bourgeois* costume of the day.

The main line of the male *bourgeois* costume had altered very little since the beginning of the century. The neck-cloth had become slightly smaller, though it was still white, and consisted in general of a double roll of material round the collar, terminating in a small white bow in front. The collar, which was attached to the shirt, was allowed to protrude against the cheek and was held in place by the neck-cloth, and the general appearance of a man's head, as contemporary satirists remark, was "as of a bunch of flowers emerging from a white paper packet." Byron's innovation consisted in leaving off the neck-cloth altogether and allowing the shirt to fall over the collar of the coat—the open tennis or cricket shirt of to-day. The Romantics substituted a black stock, carried so high up the throat that no shirt was visible at all. Their enemies suggested that they had none, and in the case of some of the poorer Romantic writers it was probably true. Romanticism in one of its aspects was the challenge of the poor artist against the growing wealth of the *bourgeoisie*. As such it had something gallant and even admirable about it. There were, however, certain exceptions, like Arsène Houssaye and Gavarni, whose Romanticism in dress was a matter of exaggerating the fashionable costume of the day. The true Romantics despised them, calling them *muscadins*.

The main difference, however, between *bourgeois* and Romantic was in the matter of beard. Except for the small side-whiskers which had come in with the Empire, the majority of men in 1830 were clean-shaven. The beard had scarcely been seen since the early seventeenth century; but now all that was changed. The Romantics made it a point of honour to grow a beard, and it is

interesting to note that this was such an outrage on prevailing custom that the first beards were hooted by children in the streets of Paris. Nevertheless the beards won; so that in retrospect the nineteenth century seems to us a bearded century, almost as completely as the eighteenth century is an unbearded one.

Beards were cut in imitation of medieval and Renaissance modes: the ultra-Romantics wore *toute la barbe*, and let their hair grow in addition, and some of the French eccentrics must have presented a very startling appearance. In England the beard made slower headway, but we can see in the person of Bulwer-Lytton, for example, that the same impulses were at work.

It is strange to reflect that it was probably Bulwer-Lytton's influence, reinforced by the Romantic passion for sombre hues, which established, once for all, the black evening coat which has lasted to the present day. Before the Romantic period evening coats had been of various colours, but before the middle of the century it became good form to wear a black one, and this proved so convenient, both to the ladies, who were not likely to have their colour scheme ruined by the coats of their partners, and to the men themselves, to whom the black evening coat was a real economy, that the custom perpetuated itself. Many attempts have been made since to revive coloured coats, but they have met with very limited success. Black evening dress is too useful. It is perhaps the only successful conspiracy of the consumer, who has managed to get his own convenience labelled with the sign of good form. It is a curious result of the alliance of romantic melancholy and fashionable hauteur.

It seemed for a time as if the Romantics would really succeed in introducing some other kind of hat in opposition to the top-hat, which had then become universal. Hats were worn with large brims, like those of Van Dyck, Rubens, and Rembrandt, and in various colours. In 1832 it was the fashion among the Romantics to wear a red hat, but this mode never spread beyond the more fanatical Romantic circles, and had little or no influence on the general fashion. The tall, cylindrical hat with a very narrow brim was somehow the hat of the nineteenth century, and nothing succeeded in challenging its supremacy.

Although it is somewhat outside the scope of our subject, it may be noted in passing that it was the Romantics who brought in again the custom of smoking. Men had smoked in the seventeenth century, mostly clay pipes, or tobacco leaves rolled up into cigars; but throughout the eighteenth century smoking disappeared from polite society, and was only practised by sailors or labourers. Fashionable people could only take snuff, and this state of affairs lasted until the early eighteen-thirties. The cigarette is not usually thought to have existed so early, but by 1834 there are references in contemporary literature to Maryland tobacco and Spanish cigarette paper. The habit was still something of a novelty, however, and was approached with a certain amount of trepidation. Smoking did not at first take place out of doors, but only in boudoirs and special rooms for the purpose. There were even cigarette clubs, where the *habitués* sat to indulge their orgies. Barbey d'Aurevilly boasts in 1836 of having smoked no less than four cigarettes in one day. By the end of the decade, however, the Boulevard des Italiens was certain to be full of cigar-smokers, and people complained that the ices at Tortoni's, the famous restaurant, had become flavoured with nicotine. Even Romantic ladies smoked, probably under the happy impression that by so doing they were helping to undermine their health.

At the same period there was an enormous increase in the drinking of spirits, especially punch, to which the references in contemporary literature are very numerous. There was no doubt an element of Anglomania in this, and also a strong element of pure Romanticism, for the punch-bowl was given a place of honour at every famous Romantic party—orgy, perhaps, would be a better name, for the Romantics spared no effort to make such affairs as macabre as possible by the introduction of death's heads, skeletons, etc., by draping the room in black, and by every manifestation of a somewhat infantile diabolism. There is not much danger in drinking punch for pleasure; but when you drink it on principle, in the quantities befitting a blighted being, the effects are likely to be unfortunate, and many a young Romantic drank himself into an early grave. It is small wonder that there arose among the middle classes a prejudice against strong liquor of any kind. In

this, as in so much else, the Romantics prepared the way for the *bourgeois* reaction of the next decade.

We have spoken already of the ideal fragility of women so much admired in the Romantic period. This was partly reinforced by the immense success of a single ballet. *La Sylphide* was first produced in 1827, when Taglioni danced the rôle in a dress of white muslin with underskirt of the same material. So great was her success that she stereotyped ballet costume for the rest of the century. Her influence on contemporary dress was no less important, for she inaugurated a rage for white and flimsy materials—not used, as they had been at the beginning of the century, in order to define and reveal the figure, but to wrap woman up, as it were, in a haze of moonlight. She powerfully reinforced the other-worldly ideal; she provided a starting-point for a sentimental dream, and when the orgies and excesses of Romanticism were over it was this dream which persisted and gave its colour to the succeeding age. For it is the *bourgeoisie*, the respectable people, who finally decide what a fashion shall be, although they very rarely inaugurate it. What they do is to assimilate as much as they can from the intellectual mode of the period and turn it to their own uses. There was obviously much in Romanticism which could find no place in any respectable family. The successful lawyer or banker of the period had no desire to see his daughters turned into *femmes fatales*. So in their hands the Romantic impulse became refined away into a somewhat mawkish sentimentality. It is this, and its influence on fashion, which we must consider in the next chapter.

Chapter III

SENTIMENTALISM AND THE RISE OF THE BOURGEOISIE

TOWARDS the end of the eighteen-thirties the Romantic impulse seemed to have spent itself, and in England, at any rate, where it had never been very strong, it was succeeded by what it is in retrospect the fashion to dub Early Victorianism. In itself the term is sufficiently vague, and to fashionable London in 1837 the accession of the young Queen seemed to have made no sort of difference whatever. How should a young girl of merely eighteen, even if she wore a crown, stem the torrent of extravagance and convert that half of Society which had grown up during the days of the Regent to calmer and simpler ways? Until her marriage, indeed, there was no reason to suppose that Victoria would ever exert such an influence. The impulse to propriety was largely the work of the Prince Consort, and his influence was perhaps more potent after his death in 1861 than it had been before.

If it had been merely a question of Court example, Early Victorianism might never have loomed so large in English social history, but other forces were at work to reinforce the natural tendencies of a hard-working German prince, and of a wife who took her colour from his temperament. Unperceived by the club-men and fine ladies of the day, something had happened to English Society since the days of the Regent. A new class had come into being—the manufacturers and traders who had begun, in the days following the Napoleonic Wars, to lay the foundations of very considerable fortunes. The new men were wealthy, but they were also puritanical, and although they might aspire to power they did not compete by ostentation. Their lives remained on the whole as simple as before, and a growing number of them took houses in London and set the tone of everything but the finest society. Most of them were very religious, for the triumph of the Evangelical school in the early years of the century had set

English and French Fashions, 1814
From *Le Bon Genre*

Parisian Dinner Dresses, 1829

Fancy-ball Dresses, 1829

its mark deeply on the middle and upper-middle classes. They were sometimes—by modern standards—intolerably prosy and sanctimonious: they believed in the gospel of work. They might sweat their employees and cover the Midlands with workmen's dwellings which are a disgrace to England to the present day, but they kept no mistresses to flaunt their wealth in London; they bought no racing stables; they chartered no yachts, and they never gambled, even on the Stock Exchange. Such men could not fail to have an important influence on the dominant tone of society. In public, unless they were politicians, they were rarely seen. Their wives and daughters ventured out of the house only when accompanied by footmen—on shopping expeditions or on errands of mercy. They drove in the Park, but without any ostentation of luxury. They were proud of representing the new empire of the Middle Classes.

It was by their influence that the clothes of men suddenly went dark. This phenomenon, which is usually supposed to have happened about the year 1850, is a very curious one. We have seen that the blackness of evening dress for men had partly a Romantic origin, and was partly due to the growing ideal of good form. Good form merits a special sociological study to itself. It may be defined, in one of its aspects, as a conspiracy of the minor gentry, in alliance with the upper middle classes, against the ostentation natural to the *grand seigneur*. It is a doctrine of limited equality under which all gentlemen are free and equal, and the gulf which the eighteenth century would have fixed between the nobility and the rest was now fixed several degrees lower down in the social scale.

The definition excluded the shopkeeping class as a whole. It excluded, for the greater part of the century, all those who made their money by trade unless they had made so much that they were able to enter the *rentier* class. To be a great manufacturer or, still better, the son of a great manufacturer was no bar to gentility. If you were in trade the only thing you could sell without loss of caste was wine. A lady was a woman who did no work beyond a few light household duties. She was placed upon a pedestal of respect probably unique in the history of the world,

for the woman-worship of the troubadour, for example, falls into a very different category. A lady, by the new standards, did not dress ostentatiously: her clothes, like those of her husband, were quiet and not obviously expensive. She did her best not to be too conspicuous and never to be talked about. Her daughters were carefully sheltered from the world till the last possible moment. There was no career for a gentlewoman. If you were so unlucky as not to possess a husband or a father you must be supported at the cost of many humiliations by some male relative. You sank into the category of 'poor relation,' or, worse still, you went into a stranger's house as that despised creature, a governess. The present age has far more in common with the Directoire than with the Early Victorian period.

We have called the ideal of gentility a conspiracy against the upper classes, or, at least, against such parts of them as could afford to be ostentatious. In the eighteenth century a duke went about the London streets with his orders glittering on the outside of his coat. He was immediately recognized for what he was, and he expected, and received, special attention; but the mid-nineteenth century succeeded in making it bad form to distinguish yourself from other gentlemen. No one any longer wore any outside mark of his rank, except on very formal occasions. In the eighteenth century a wealthy peer bought himself a coat more richly embroidered than those of his neighbours, and went about in it without any sense of incongruity. This too became bad form, and a gentleman was allowed no more distinction in dress than any good tailor could give him; and this meant in practice that all gentlemen looked more or less alike. Of course, a wide gulf was fixed between the gentleman and the cad, or, as Thackeray would have said, the snob, for the word 'snob' has oddly reversed its meaning and originally meant simply a low fellow. But the gentry of the Early Victorian period were certainly snobs in the modern sense. In fact, there has probably never been more snobbery than at that period. When social ranks are well defined a man can afford to mix with those he regards as his inferiors without any loss of caste; but when the ranks are ill-defined, then snobbery and the instinct of self-preservation are almost one and

the same thing. There is far more snobbery in the early numbers of *Punch* than in the whole of the eighteenth-century issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

In France similar influences were at work. At the time of the accession of Queen Victoria the monarch across the water was proud to be known as "the *bourgeois* King." He made a point of dressing like a private gentleman; he eschewed uniform and carried an umbrella; and he too was but a reflection of the social revolution which had taken place—the rise of the *bourgeoisie*. But the rise of the *bourgeoisie* in France was by no means so complete or so unchallenged as it was in England. Louis-Philippe was never a very popular king, and a large number of his subjects despised him for those very qualities which in England would have made him admired. The first part of his reign saw some of the worst excesses of the Romantic movement, which may be regarded as the revolt of the artists against the growing dominance of the despised *bourgeois*.

It was then that the word *bourgeois* acquired the derogatory flavour which it has retained ever since. In the eighteenth century to call a man a *bourgeois* was to describe him, not to abuse him. A cab-driver in Paris in 1750, as we may learn from the memoirs of Casanova, could address his fare as *mon bourgeois* without any hint of impropriety on either side. If the man obviously belonged to the middle classes it would have been absurd to address him as *monseigneur*, and no one had yet learned to say *citoyen*. It was the French Romantics of the eighteen-thirties who succeeded in making the word *bourgeois* a term of abuse.

In resisting the fashions which the rise of the *bourgeoisie* imposed they were less successful. Even in France the Romantic revolt may be said to have faded away about the year 1837. The fantastic medieval clothes, the wide-brimmed hats, the brightly coloured waistcoats—all these things had vanished. All that remained were the beards, partly perhaps because a man tends to retain the cut of whisker which he has affected in his youth, and when the Romantics had settled down into respectable citizens they wore quieter clothes, but they kept their beards.

Feminine dress in 1840 shows very little distinction between

London and Paris: the main lines are the same everywhere. Enormously wide sleeves have vanished. They started by slipping down to the forearm in a kind of inverted leg-of-mutton shape. They then became narrowed to the wrist, with a discreet little white wrist-band. The only change which occurs in the sleeve during the next decade lies in the gradual growth in importance of this wrist-band, swelling underneath the sleeve, which itself grows shorter to accommodate it. At first it is still gathered in at the wrist, but later becomes open and bell-shaped.

The *corsage* is severe and moulded to the figure. Except in evening dress it comes right up to the throat. Evening dress, with the straight line of its décolletage—when it includes the shoulders, as it often did, this can be a most attractive fashion—echoes the mode no longer of the end of the sixteenth century, but of the Cavalier period of about 1640. If only the heads and shoulders of women be considered there is the closest parallel between the fashions of 1840 and the fashions of 1640, even to the dressing of the hair.

The waist was still narrow, though perhaps not quite so narrow as it had been in 1833. Skirts were even wider, and in order to fill out their fullness it was necessary to wear a great many petticoats underneath. Seven, including one of red flannel, was no unusual number, and the weight of clothes worn by the average woman in this period must have been enormous. They must have been very hampering to their wearers' movements, and women at this time moved as little as possible. Skirts being now down to the ground, instead of four or five inches above it, as they had been in the Romantic period, women seemed to glide rather than walk. Like the Queen of Spain in the famous story, women had no legs; at most, the tip of a tiny square-toed slipper could be seen peeping out beneath the skirt. Writers of the period compared women's feet with mice. The feet of the ladies of the Directoire and the Empire had not been in the least like mice. Thackeray thinks it necessary to apologize for mentioning ankles, for these very necessary parts of the female anatomy had gained an erotic value by being hidden. The Romantic *femme fatale* was completely demoded. Woman took her place in the scheme of things as wife

ASSEMBLY ROOM, 1832–33
Design for fashion plate. Gouache
From the original, in the Bethnal Green Museum

KENSINGTON GARDENS, 1832–33
Design for fashion plate. Gouache
From the original, in the Bethnal Green Museum

and mother, with a demure self-effacement very different from the manners of a former age.

Such a state of things, however, did not pass without a protest—at least, in France: the year 1840 saw the advent of the *lionnes*. There is a whole literature concerned with the nature and habits of these curious creatures. The *lion*, her male counterpart, had prowled the boulevards for some years. He was a dandification, if the word may be permitted, of the young Romantic, and his title may have originated from his flowing mane; but everything about him had some kind of zoological name. His groom was his tiger.[1] His *danseuse* at the Opéra was called his rat. Uzanne quotes a novel of the period which begins with the words, "*Le lion avait envoyé son tigre chez son rat.*" Another writer defines the *lionne* as "a rich married woman, pretty and coquettish, who can handle the whip and the pistol as well as her husband, ride like a lancer, smoke like a dragoon, and drink any quantity of iced champagne."

The important thing was the riding. There has never, until our own day, been such a rage for horsemanship among women as about the year 1840. It was part, no doubt, of the general Anglomania of the time, which extended even to matters of interior decoration. Contemporary writers note with astonishment that among fashionable Frenchwomen the old traditional French *salon* has been abandoned in favour of *le confort d'outre-mer*, with low divans, deep armchairs, etc., although by modern standards the English armchairs of 1840 were not very deep. Horsemanship for women had always had its devotees in England, and at the beginning of Victoria's reign they became very much more numerous. The Queen herself was often seen on horseback, riding side-saddle and clothed in the long flowing riding-habit seen in some of her earlier pictures. Women, of course, never rode astride. But the *femme amazone* was none the less a striking figure in the eyes of her French contemporaries.

The *lionne* was a kind of early feminist, by which is meant a woman who imitates masculine habits as nearly as she can. She

[1] This curious name may possibly have originated from the habit of dressing grooms and footmen in waistcoats of alternate black and yellow stripes. Footmen still wear these waistcoats, which are thought by some to have had their origin in the dress of the valet in the Italian Comedy.

was in revolt against subjection. Consciously or unconsciously she resented the dominance of the *bourgeois* ideal, which would have confined women to their double rôle of wife and mother, almost unseen and quite untalked about; and her revolt found a clarion voice in the works of George Sand, who herself wore masculine attire whenever she could and whose influence was enormous.

George Sand was the inspiration of the *lionne*, but the embodiment of her dream was Lola Montez. It would be out of place in the present work to trace the career of this astonishing woman. She passed through Europe like a whirlwind, provoking something like a revolution in Poland, arousing violent passions in Paris—to such an extent that a man was killed in a duel on her behalf—and at the height of her career as the mistress of the King of Bavaria, almost driving the Jesuits from the country and governing in their stead. It is sufficient to note that she was an able and furious horsewoman, that she wore riding costume by preference and caused herself to be painted in it, and that she was rarely without her whip, a weapon which she preferred to use not on horses, but on men. Her effect on the imagination of her contemporaries was prodigious.

Women's riding-habits were at first, according to the taste of the day, almost excessively masculine, except that long and trailing skirts were worn—skirts so long and trailing that they not only frightened the horses, but made a fall more dangerous. The bodice was extremely tight-fitting, with tight sleeves, and the hat was a man's top-hat with no more ornamentation than a veil lightly wrapped round it. In the early fifties, however, the round hat of masculine appearance was almost always exchanged for a slouched hat, sometimes of a round form and turned up round the brim. Where it had formerly never been embellished, even by a bow, it had now a long sweeping feather on one side, and sometimes on both sides, of varying colours, but usually of black or brown like the hat. In winter the hat was of soft and durable felt: in summer of a fine straw. The habit was now no longer so tight as it had been, but was often made loose with deep cuffs, or was worn tight with a loose jacket or *casaque* over it. This was more comfortable, but it did not add to the attractive appearance of

the rider. A plain white collar of fine lawn was recommended to be worn with the habit, with deep lawn cuffs underneath the sleeves and gauntlet gloves of thick leather. It will be seen from this description that the modern stereotyped habit had not yet assumed its final form, and is, in fact, far more recent in date than some of our modern purists would have us believe.

With regard to the *bourgeois* or gentlemanly ideal of dress, much information can be gathered from a curious little book entitled *The Habits of Good Society*.[1] There is no date, and the author is anonymous, but from the engraved frontispiece, showing him looking out of a club window in St James's Street, it is obvious that it cannot have been written very far from the year 1850. The author, after laying down the doctrine of simplicity and appropriateness, of never being conspicuous in any society—either by over- or under-dressing—proceeds to give details of the wardrobe of a well-dressed man of the period. He must have, he says, four kinds of coats: a morning coat, a frock-coat, a dress-coat, and an overcoat. An economical man might do well with four of the first (this seems a handsome allowance) and one of each of the others per annum. The author continues:

> The dress of an English gentleman in the present day should not cost him more than a tenth part of his income on an average. Without doubt fortunes vary more than position. If his income is large it will take a much smaller proportion; if small a larger one. Generally speaking, however, a man with £300 a year should not devote more than £30 to his outward man. The seven coats in question should cost about £18. Six pairs of morning and one of evening trousers [again by modern standards a very handsome allowance] will cost £9. Four morning waistcoats, one for evening, another £4. Gloves, linen, hats, scarves, and neckties about £10, and the important item of boots at least £5 more.

The well-dressed man who employed a moderately priced tailor could therefore dress himself on under £50 a year.

The best walking dress for non-professional men was a suit of tweed of a uniform colour, ordinary boots, gloves not too dark for the coat, a scarf with a pin in winter or a small tie of one colour

[1] *The Habits of Good Society: a Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (James Hogg and Sons, London).

in summer, a respectable black hat, a cane. The walking dress should vary according to the place and hour. In the country or at the seaside a straw hat or wideawake might take the place of the beaver, and gloves be altogether dispensed with; but in London, where a man was supposed to make visits as well as lounge in the Park, the frock-coat of a very dark blue or black, or a black cloth cutaway, white waistcoat, and lavender gloves, were almost indispensable. Our author thinks the cane very important, "as the Englishman does not gesticulate when talking, and in consequence has nothing to do with his hands." However, if you did not care for a walking-stick you might carry an umbrella. The shirt, whether seen or not (an odd touch this—the neck-cloth, even in the fifties, was sometimes high enough to conceal the shirt altogether), should be quite plain. The shirt collar should never have a colour on it, but might be stiff or turned down, according as the wearer was Brummellically or Byronically disposed. The scarf was simple and of modest colours, and was recommended as the best thing to wear round the neck, but if a necktie was preferred it should not be too long nor tied in too stiff and studied a manner. The frock-coat should be ample and loose, and a tall, well-built man might throw it back. At any rate, it should never be buttoned up. The frock-coat, or a black cutaway with a white waistcoat in summer, is noted as the best dress for making calls. It is evident that the black swallow-tailed coat was completely demoded for day wear, for it is mentioned as typical of members of fanatical sects.

What our author has to say about man's evening dress is extremely instructive. He mentions the fact that breeches had gone out (they had, indeed, disappeared for a whole generation when he wrote his book), and that men were condemned to dance all the year round in thick black cloth trousers, which were not only heavy but tight. In America, he laments, a man might go to a ball in white ducks. In France he had the option of light grey, but the Englishman was doomed to black.[1] Our author continues:

[1] It is interesting to note in this connexion that one of the things which made Whistler conspicuous when he settled in England in the late fifties was his habit of wearing white duck trousers. He was simply following the fashion of his country, but for most Englishmen it was an unpardonable eccentricity.

Modes de Paris, 1837

Modes de Paris, 1843

Walking Dresses, 1850

Walking Dresses, 1853

Fortunately, modern Republicanism has triumphed over ancient etiquette, and the tail-coat of to-day is looser and more easy than it was twenty years ago. I can only say, let us never strive to make it bearable till we have abolished it. Let us abjure such vulgarities as silk collars, white silk linings, and so forth, which attempt to beautify this monstrosity as a hangman might wreathe his gallows with roses. The plainer the manner in which you wear your misery the better.

Then again, the black waistcoat is tight and comfortless. . . . In France and America the cooler white waistcoat is admitted. We have scouted it and left it to aldermen and shopkeepers. Would I were an alderman or shopkeeper in the middle of July when I am compelled to dance in a full attire of black cloth. However, as we have it let us make the best of it, and not parade our misery by hideous ornamentation. The only evening waistcoat for all purposes for a man of taste is one of simple black cloth with the simplest possible buttons.

It will be seen that evening dress with a black tail-coat had now completely stereotyped itself, and never varied, as our author quaintly remarks, for "dinner party, muffin-worry, or ball." The only distinction allowed was in the necktie. For dinner, the opera, and the ball it had to be white, and the smaller the better. The black tie was only admitted for evening parties of an informal kind, much as it is worn to-day—only, of course, nowadays with a dinner jacket. The shirt-front should be plain, with unpretending small pleats. The French at this period had introduced a custom of wearing pink under the shirt. This in England was considered an abomination. Gloves should be white, not yellow or lavender. They should always be worn at a ball, and at a dinner party in town should be worn on entering the room and put on after dinner.

Men's clothes in 1850 showed every sign of stereotyping themselves for ever, and in evening dress, except for a few minor modifications and the invention of the dinner jacket, they certainly succeeded. To such an extent was this true that very few voices were raised in protest against the ridiculous fashion of Englishmen wearing a black silk hat and a frock-coat of cloth in every country in the world, including the tropical countries. The code of Pall Mall was imposed on the gentlemen of Calcutta and Colombo.

Even in London in hot weather it would have been more suitable to do as the French and Americans did, to wear whole suits of white linen, with a straw hat and a bright blue tie. There was, of course, one objection—the smokiness of the atmosphere; and this, in the opinion of the present writer, is, together with puritanism and Good Form, the main reason for the sudden darkening in English clothes about the middle of the nineteenth century. For the first time in the history of the world the atmosphere of a great city was full of black smuts, the amount of sea-coal consumed in the eighteenth century not being sufficient to charge the air with impurities. It was possible in summer to wear thin light tweeds, but even these were not countenanced in St James's and the Park; and a man of fashion had to be content with a white waistcoat of the thinnest possible material for his frock-coat. It seemed in the middle of the nineteenth century that the triumph of the *bourgeoisie* was complete, the clothes of their women varying only between narrow limits, and the clothes of their men not at all.

Chapter IV

RISE AND FALL OF THE CRINOLINE

Octave Uzanne, writing in 1898, gives it as his considered opinion that the most hideous fashion in the whole history of feminine dress was the fashion of 1860. This is an interesting example of that "gap in appreciation" which will be dealt with more fully in the penultimate chapter. Few people would subscribe to such an opinion to-day. They would be more likely to find the most hideous costume in 1900, almost exactly the same interval of time separating ourselves from that latter date as separated Uzanne from 1860. Hardly anyone in 1944 thinks the costumes of 1860 hideous. They are thought of as romantic, the term 'romantic' being one of such wide application that it has almost ceased to have any meaning at all. The crinoline has taken to itself in perspective a period charm of which nothing probably will now rob it until the end of all things. If the curtain rises at a modern revue or musical comedy and the actresses or the chorus are seen to be wearing crinolines it is almost certain that the music will be soft and the songs sentimental; so curious is the effect of the passing of time.

In reality the crinoline at its inception was nothing less than sentimental: it was, indeed, from one point of view, the first great triumph of the machine age—the application to feminine costume of all those principles of steel construction employed in the Menai Bridge and the Crystal Palace. It was at once intensely absurd and extremely practicable. At least, it was infinitely more practicable than the layers and layers of thick petticoats and the little wads of horsehair which it replaced. Its absurdity lay in its effort to push the principles of its construction to illogical extremes, to get ever bigger and bigger, until two women in full dress could hardly stand in the same room together. It was this which ultimately killed it.

But at first, when it was in its heyday, the fact that it was

inconvenient seemed to make no difference whatever. It is sometimes thought that women will never return to encumbering garments, in view of the spread of such a practice as motoring. Yet we must admit that while the short skirts of 1926–30 were extremely convenient for pressing the accelerator or the brake, the long evening dresses of a few years later were extremely inconvenient; all the same, women intending to drive their own cars did not refrain from wearing them. Likewise, the universality of railway travel in 1860, together with the extreme narrowness of the accommodation provided, did not prevent anyone from donning a crinoline in order to go to the seaside. The laws of practicability are of extremely limited application in any matter connected with women's dress. No fashion has ever been driven out by convincing anybody that it was impracticable and inconvenient. It should make us hesitate to assume that the recent comparative scantiness of feminine clothes is necessarily doomed to last.

The hoop has made its appearance many times in the history of feminine costume. Captain Cook found examples among the South Sea islanders: the ladies of Elizabeth's Court went about in a clumsy farthingale, like nothing so much as a cartwheel round their waists. During the graceful seventeenth century the farthingale disappeared in all but the remoter German Courts, and it is thought that it was from one of these that the fashion revived in the early years of the eighteenth century. It revived, however, in a much more graceful form. The hoops and panniers of the second quarter of the eighteenth century gave rise to some of the most enchanting dresses ever invented. They were made for the most part of whalebone, but sometimes of metal, as if to foreshadow the crinoline, and it was often possible to lower them at the sides by means of a string in order to pass through narrow doorways. None the less their use was so universal as to necessitate the building of wider staircases, and even the bending of the balusters outward, as can be seen in some graceful examples of the period.

Hoops of any kind had disappeared long before the French Revolution, and there could naturally be no place for them in post-

CRINOLINOMANIA, 1858
Lithograph by Charles Vernier
From the original, in the Victoria and Albert Museum

The Crinoline, 1859

The End of the Crinoline, 1869

Revolutionary fashion. So long as the high waist endured they would have been an obvious absurdity; but an exception to their complete disappearance must be made in favour of English Court dress. The hooped skirt remained *de rigueur* at Court until the end of the reign of George III, and as ladies to be in the fashion had also to wear a high waist the effect was ludicrous in the extreme—an exceedingly full skirt, springing out boldly from immediately underneath the breasts. As soon as the waist becomes normal it is always possible for hoops to return, and there is a completely logical development from 1820 until the days of the full crinoline. By 1830 women were already wearing numerous petticoats, and ten years later it had become necessary to make the skirts stand out still farther from the body by the use of small pads. These pads were for the most part made of horsehair—*crin*, from which we derive the word 'crinoline.'

By the beginning of the French Second Empire petticoats had become so numerous, skirts so encumbering, that it was very difficult for women to move about. Science came to the rescue. Circular hoops were devised, of diminishing size, like the ribs of an airship, and when these were sewn into an underskirt it was possible to give the impression of an enormous number of petticoats without, in fact, wearing any petticoats at all. The first crinolines must have given an astonishing sense of freedom to those bold spirits who adopted them. Underneath the great bell-shape of the outer skirt the limbs were free—freer than they had been since the forgotten days of the Empire. The legs, of course, were as invisible as ever, except by one of the numerous mischances which will be dealt with in a moment. But in case they should be seen they were clothed in long white pantaloons, edged with lace and reaching to the ankle. Little girls also wore them down to the ankle in spite of the fact that their skirts were very much shorter, and so gave rise to that extraordinary appearance associated in most people's minds with Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It is a strange reflection on human vanity that, to save expense, these pantaloons of little girls were sometimes abbreviated into what were called pantalettes, which were also of white material, ending in lace at the ankle, but reaching no farther than

above the knee. They could be changed frequently, and were less expensive to wash than the complete article.

The power of a fashion once it is launched has something extraordinary about it. It is like a force of nature—a flood, an avalanche, a forest fire. Nothing seems to be able to turn it back until it has spent itself, until it has provoked a reaction by its very excess. The crinoline lasted for nearly twenty years, and a whole library could be collected of the literature of satire, diatribe, moral indignation, and merely æsthetic protest to which it gave rise. It was all to no purpose, for, as we can see in retrospect, there was something profoundly symbolic in the crinoline of the epoch in which it reigned. "Woman," said the mid-Victorian convention, "is an unapproachable goddess," and physically unapproachable the women of the mid-nineteenth century certainly were. Surrounded by a complicated bastion of cloth, sometimes equal in diameter to their own height, they could be shaken hands with, but hardly embraced in any more intimate fashion. It was impossible to sit beside them on a sofa, for the folds of their dress took up all the available space. It was almost impossible to enter a room beside them. The man had to fall behind to allow for the passage of the majestic ship which woman had become. "Touch me not," said the crinoline, but the command, as the course of social events during the Second Empire in France was rapidly to demonstrate, was as hollow as the crinoline itself.

It may be said without much fear of contradiction that no fashion is ever successful unless it can be used as an instrument of seduction, and seductive the crinoline certainly was. When we see engravings of ladies with skirts like old-fashioned tea-cosies we are apt to think of the structure as solid and immovable; but, of course, nothing was farther from the truth. The crinoline was in a constant state of agitation, swaying from side to side. It was like a rather restless captive balloon, and not at all, except in shape, like the *igloo* of the Eskimos. It swayed now to one side, now to the other, tipped up a little, swung forward and backward. Any pressure on one side of the steel hoops was communicated by their elasticity to the other side, and resulted in a sudden upward shooting of the skirt. It was probably this upward shooting which

gave mid-Victorian men their complex about ankles, and it certainly resulted in a new fashion in boots. Throughout the forties the footgear of women had been reduced to a heelless slipper, scarcely seen among the voluminousness of the dress; but now boots came in, with higher heels and laced half-way up towards the calf. Without wishing in any way to accuse the entire mid-Victorian world of shoe-fetishism one can hardly resist the conclusion that the erotic significance of boots and shoes received partial encouragement from the invention of the crinoline. The crinoline was certainly not a moral garment, and the period in which it reached its greatest development, Second Empire France, was not a moral period. The social history of the Second Empire is the history of the *cocotte* and the *cocodette*. But it is not the purpose of the present volume to embark upon the lives and stories of any of those notorious ladies who set the tone of an entire society while Napoleon III was still Emperor of the French.[1]

The extraordinary vogue and the power of such women sprang from a completely new orientation of society. Since the Revolution of 1848 the *bourgeois* ideal common under Louis-Philippe had singularly changed. It is one of the tricks of the Time Spirit to make us think that up to a certain date everything was static and that after that date everything was in movement, generally in movement down a slippery slope; but certainly there was much more movement, even in the physical sense, in 1850 than there had been in the previous generation. It was owing partly to the increased efficiency in modes of transport. By that year railways, while still far from being as numerous as they were at the end of the century, had covered sufficient of the surface of the civilized globe to enable people to travel more easily than they had ever done before. More important, they enabled people to travel cheaply, so that whole classes which in a previous generation would never have moved from their home towns now went on holiday like their richer compatriots. From this period we may notice the extraordinary popularity of watering-places, and humanity in civilized countries entered on a new stage of

[1] A general account of these ladies may be found in *The Elegant Woman*, by Gertrude Aretz (London, 1932), Chapters XII and XIII.

nomadism, which it had scarcely known since cities were first founded.

But at watering-places and cities of leisure generally it was impossible to keep the rigid line between the classes which had existed in a more static society. At Spa, at Baden-Baden, and later at Monte Carlo most fashionable pleasures were open to anyone who had money to spend. The known woman of pleasure would sit side by side at the gaming-table with the *grande dame*, and although the latter might look down her nose at her she could not do so with conviction, even to herself, if the *demi-mondaine* wore a richer or more striking *toilette* than she did. The conflict of elegance therefore became instantly more desperate, the competition of luxury more necessary, if one's place was to be maintained. In Paris it might be possible if difficult, to keep a Cora Pearl in her place; in the watering-place it was impossible. The battle of the *grande dame* was lost from the beginning, for her husband was ranged on the other side. Every man of fashion lived in two worlds, the *monde* and the *demi-monde*. In the first he met the men of his own class and the women of his own class; in the second he met again the men of his own class, but the women were of another stratum altogether. It can hardly be doubted which cost him the more money, and the strange fact must be stated that it was precisely the expensiveness of the *grande cocotte* which constituted her chief attraction. Most of the really celebrated *demi-mondaines* were women of a certain age. It had taken them perhaps ten years of frantic battle to attain the position where they stood, and to be known to support the extravagances of such women became a kind of certificate of *chic*. Many men of fashion required no more of the reigning queen of beauty than that she should be seen by their side occasionally in public and be known to be spending their money. Such a situation is admirably described in Zola's *Nana*, perhaps the most complete picture in existence of the *mœurs* of the Second Empire. Never had the *hetæræ* enjoyed such prestige, for never perhaps had the *jeunes filles du monde* been more carefully guarded. The historian of manners, indeed, is forced to the conclusion that an epoch which is not an age of promiscuity is necessarily an age of prostitution, and prostitution in

the grand manner. The Second Empire falls into the second category, as does also perhaps the first decade of the twentieth century. The Directoire and the period immediately following the war of 1914-18 fall into the first.

The results are nearly always the same. In ages of prostitution fashion is dictated by the *grande cocotte*, and tends to favour the older woman. In ages of promiscuity fashion tends to favour the younger woman, the schoolgirl just escaped from her leading strings. The extremely juvenile fashions of the nineteen-twenties are a case in point.

Certainly under the Second Empire the whole course of fashion was dictated by the *femme entretenue*, and was imitated, with only minor variations, by the more fashionable of the *femmes du monde*. Some of the latter, owing to the manners which they assumed, their extravagances of *toilette* and of conduct, their use of rouge and false hair, and all the artificial aids to beauty necessary to the aged woman for whom love is a business, were baptized with the instructive name of *cocodettes*.

It has often been said that the Empress Eugénie was the last ruling sovereign to dictate the mode, and to a certain extent this is true, although, on the other hand, the extreme soberness of Victoria's costume helped to prevent in England the extravagances of dress common on the other side of the Channel. But Eugénie did not so much dictate the mode as open the doors to those who really did so. There was an inevitable element of the *parvenu* about the Empress. As she had no royal birth to fall back upon she was compelled in some sort to win estimation by being in the forefront of the fashion. For us the crinoline has receded sufficiently in time to take its place in our historical perspective. We see it as a period piece, and it seems suitable to its epoch and even beautiful. But there were many of the Empress's contemporaries who, even while they acknowledged her influence on the mode, did not think her taste very sure. Her taste, indeed, tended to be Spanish rather than French, and she permitted in her *entourage*, if she did not actually encourage it, that display of rather crude colours so characteristic of the period. The colour chart of dress during the nineteenth century will be considered in a separate

chapter. It is sufficient here to note that the quiet colours of the forties gave place in the next two decades to the most violent hues, mingled in a manner for which there was no excuse except the desire to be striking. We should not forget, however, that during the most joyous days of the Second Empire a nucleus of the old French aristocracy held itself aloof from the tumult, wore quieter colours, and refused to adopt the more extravagant designs of the great dressmakers. They hoped to set the tone once more when the Empire should have run its course. How far such hopes were disappointed must be discussed in later chapters, for the Faubourg Saint-Germain never really recovered its influence, and now probably never will.

We have mentioned the *grands couturiers*, and an interesting fact about these must now be noted. Up to the Second Empire the great designers of modes, even in Paris, had been women. Now, for the first time, they were men, a new race of fashion dictators, of whom the greatest was M. Worth. To the older-fashioned *grandes dames* their pretensions seemed outrageous. We get a glimpse of them through the eyes of no less a person than Hippolyte Taine, who had already made his name as a historian when his friend Marcelin, who was connected with *La Vie Parisienne*, asked him to supply some notes on Paris in the manner of his *Voyage aux Pyrénées*. It is sufficiently astonishing to think of Taine writing for a paper like *La Vie Parisienne*, although during the first thirty years of its career that celebrated journal had some pretensions to literary quality. Here is his picture of the *couturier*:

> Women will stoop to any baseness to be dressed by him. This little dry, black, nervous creature receives them in a velvet coat, carelessly stretched out on a divan, a cigar between his lips. He says to them, "Walk! Turn! Good! Come back in a week, and I will compose you a *toilette* which will suit you." It is not they who choose it; it is he. They are only too happy to let him do it, and even for that it needs an introduction. Mme B. a personage of the real *monde* and elegant to boot—went to him last month to order a dress. "Madame," he said, "by whom are you presented?"
>
> "I don't understand."
>
> "I am afraid you must be presented in order to be dressed by me."
>
> She went away, suffocated with rage. But others stayed, saying,

"I don't care how rude he is so long as he dresses me. After all, it is the most elegant who win." Some ladies, his favourites, made a habit of calling upon him before going to the ball in order that he should inspect their *toilette*. He gave little tea-parties at ten o'clock at night. To those who expressed astonishment he replied, "I am a great artist: I have the colour of Delacroix and I compose. *Une toilette vaut un tableau.*" To anyone who was irritated at his airs he replied, "Sir, in every artist there is a touch of Napoleon." When M. Ingres painted the Duchess of A. he wrote to her one morning, "Madame, I have need of you this evening at the theatre in a white dress with a rose in the middle of your hair." The Duchess cancelled all her engagements, put on the dress, sent for the rose and went to the theatre. Art is God. The *bourgeois* is made to follow our orders.

In the year 1866 a change comes over the crinoline. It is no longer symmetrical, projecting as much to the front as to the back. Instead it slips backward, and the uppermost ring of steel is smaller: the dress, seen from the side, is a right-angled triangle. In 1867 there is a new modification: the crinoline is actually smaller. The decline has begun. In 1868 it is only half as wide as its wearer's height, while some of the dresses invented by the *couturiers* show a mass of material behind ending in a train. Others looped this mass of material into a kind of bunch. What we are watching as we turn over the fashion plates of the period is the embryo bustle. It may seem merely fanciful to suggest that this development reflects the political tendencies of the time, yet it is true to say that at the same moment when the crinoline began to lose its amplitude the fortunes of the Empire began to decline. The prestige of Napoleon III, like a pricked balloon, sagged visibly, damaged by the ill-success of the expedition to Mexico, by the growing attacks of the Press, and finally, in the Emperor's last desperate attempt to retrieve his popularity, by the humiliation of *l'Empire libérale*. It needed the cannon of Sedan to lay flat the walls of the imperial Jericho, but those same walls had already trembled and quaked two years before at the sound of the great voice of Gambetta and the sarcastic lash of Rochefort. By 1868 the Empire was dead already; so was the crinoline. A mere coincidence; yet it is such coincidences which make *l'histoire des mœurs* so fascinating a study.

It almost seems as if the mode reflects subconsciously or semi-consciously the subterranean movements of society rather than its obvious wishes or habits. The crinoline was wiser than those who wore it. It diminished its pretensions and took shelter before the coming storm, while the *monde* and the *demi-monde* continued to lead that wild life of gaiety, that breathless competition in luxury and ostentation, which is the dominant note of the Second Empire. Up to the moment of the catastrophe the *grandes cocottes* plundered their lovers and displayed their luxury before the eyes of their rivals. The *cocodettes* imitated them as best they could; but underneath all the apparent gaiety and frivolity there was a new note of inquiry, almost of fear. There were murmurs in the streets and gatherings in the poorer quarters of Paris; the men of the Commune were meeting already with pistols in their pockets. Émile Ollivier, head of the Constitutional Empire, might assure his friends that everything was in order. More clear-sighted men knew that it was not so. The Emperor was ill, the Empress anxious. Prince Pierre-Napoléon killed a hostile journalist with a pistol-shot. Henri Rochefort, the implacable enemy of the Empire, was elected Deputy. A scion of the house of Hohenzollern became a candidate for the throne of Spain. Zola has painted an unforgettable picture of the death of "Nana," abandoned by her friends, while below in the street the crowd rushes to and fro with exultant shouts, crying, "*A Berlin! A Berlin!*" They did not go to Berlin—it was the Germans who came to Paris.

Chapter V

THE TWO BUSTLES AND THE ÆSTHETIC MOVEMENT

THE years 1870 and 1871 were tragic years for France. During the disasters of the war, the privations of the siege, and the horrors of the Commune it would have been strange indeed if any notable new fashion had been introduced. All the fine ladies of both *monde* and *demi-monde* who had led the round of gaiety, never with more abandonment than in the closing years of the Empire, either fled from Paris or remained there to perform works of mercy. In this even the *grandes cocottes* did their share, and their occupations left them little time for planning new *toilettes*, and little opportunity even for wearing their old ones, unless they were of the simplest possible cut and of suitably sombre colour. Uzanne remarks that an apparent negligence, such as was to be found in the English portrait-painters, became the new chic, the mode usually adopted.

The reference to English portrait-painters is interesting, for it shows that England was once more to exercise an influence on the feminine mode, just as it had done in times of upheaval eighty years before. The crinoline had been a specifically French thing, even, as we have seen, a Second Empire thing, and although the English had adopted crinolines also, the rise and fall of that astonishing creation had followed French political events rather than English. With France momentarily in eclipse England reasserted its sway. Every one dressed alike, and there was no kind of competition in elegance or luxury. Uzanne's remark, however, still sounds a little oddly in modern ears. He saw only extreme simplicity where we can still perceive a considerable complication of cut. Even if dresses were not as voluminous as they had been ten years before they were still ample enough, and the abandonment of the wire-cage crinoline led inevitably to an increase in the number of petticoats. The art of making lingerie meanwhile advanced, and the petticoats which women readopted

were much more complicated and luxurious than those of the eighteen-forties. The lace which disappeared from the outside of the costume was often to be found sewn to the hems of the hidden skirt, and this tendency towards an ever-increasing luxury of *dessous* increased steadily until the end of the century and beyond.

Nothing is more remarkable in the French character than its capacity for rapid revival after a catastrophe. It is said that on the morning after the execution of Robespierre fashion and gaiety burst forth anew. The reaction was considerably less violent after the Franco-Prussian War, but it was none the less a reality. Once the Commune had been suppressed those who had fled from Paris began to return, and they were accompanied by an incredible number of sightseers, provincial, English, and even American. The sight which met their eyes was no doubt sad enough. Many of the most important buildings of the capital were in ruins; soldiers were still to be seen everywhere; the sound of fusillades indicated the continued execution of *communards*. But towards the end of June 1871 observers noted that, while the Prussians had not yet evacuated the forts round Paris, the capital itself had begun to resume its wonted aspect—at least, as far as the life of its streets was concerned. A newspaper at the beginning of July noted with astonishment that traffic blocks had already reappeared in the busier streets. Famous cafés reopened their doors, and those who sat at their little tables were, with few exceptions, the people who had sat there before 1870. Women readopted, with very few variations, the robes they had worn before Sedan. Colours reappeared: straw-coloured robes with greenish *corsages* and violet-coloured sleeves, little hats covered with roses. Light-coloured dresses showed rows of lace, draped over flounced silk skirts short enough to reveal varicoloured boots.

On June 29 there was a great review at Longchamps, which, contrary to the expectations of many, was a triumphant success. Women put on their smartest clothes and hurried to give the soldiers an enthusiastic reception, a gesture of defiance towards Bismarck, a recognition of the French soldiers' bravery in battle and a consolation for their defeat. The life of Paris had started

again; theatres reopened, the old favourites returned; salons were reorganized; the carnival of 1872 was one of the most splendid that Paris had ever known.

The election of Marshal MacMahon to the Presidency of the Republic had the effect of prolonging for several years the condition of manners which had existed during the Second Empire. So at least it seemed to contemporaries, although undoubtedly the short reign of M. Thiers had brought a *bourgeois* note into society unknown under Napoleon III. Both M. and Mme Thiers were incurably *bourgeois*, and took no pains to hide it. But with the advent of the Marshal it seemed that the old days had returned, and Paris became once more the centre of elegant taste, of suppers, and of balls. The salon of Princesse Mathilde Bonaparte recovered its ancient splendour, even a little more perhaps, for she had never enjoyed the favour of the Court under Napoleon III. Another important salon was that of M. and Mme Edmond Adam, Rue du Croissant. The chief importance of this salon was a political one, and the *lion* was Gambetta; but Mme Adam has left in her *mémoires*[1] an account of the furnishing of her rooms which is not without interest to the present work. The entrance hall was full of old oak furniture and palms in boxes. The dining-room was furnished with Louis Seize chairs, while another reception-room known as the Salon Turc, was hung with Oriental stuffs and furnished with a mixture of low divans covered with old embroidery, Louis Seize sofas, trophies of arms, bronzes, old porcelain, Chinese vases, Viennese mirrors, chairs encrusted with lacquer, and Japanese materials draped over the doors and windows, the whole being lit by a large Venetian lantern. This *intérieur artiste à la Goncourt*, as Bertaut[2] calls it, was very characteristic of the period. It represents the old Romantic decoration plus a new multiple exoticism which, in the modern view, tended to turn dwelling-houses into museums. It is interesting to note in such a mixture the Louis Seize chairs, which surely must have felt themselves very much out of place; but there was a real revival of Louis Seize in the eighteen-seventies, so much so that there is a

[1] *Mes Angoisses et mes Luttes* (Paris, 1907).
[2] *L'Opinion et les Mœurs: la Troisième République* (Paris, 1931).

considerable similarity between the dresses of that period and the dresses of 1775. There was the same high and elaborate *coiffure*, with a hat perched on the front and tilted forward, and the panniers, which composed, as it were, the prolongation of the bustle, were deliberately imitated from the earlier period. In the minds of their originators the costumes of 1872 were eighteenth-century costumes, or almost so. *Punch*, in July 1872, has a cartoon showing a lady in what the artist imagined to be pure eighteenth-century costume walking in the street. The legend underneath reads: "Why half copy the old costume? Much better come out in the style at once." To modern eyes this style, which the artist thought was that of a Watteau shepherdess, is simply a costume of 1872. There could be no more convincing proof of the fundamental similarity nor of the difficulty of inventing anything really new.

The Japanese note in the salon of Mme Adam was a tribute to the newly discovered art of the Japanese colour-print. Specimens of these prints had reached Paris as packings of seemingly more valuable objects in the middle fifties, and at first had provoked no attention beyond that of a few artists. Among these was Whistler, who was strongly influenced by the Japanese during the early part of his career. *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine*, one of the earliest pictures which he painted after coming to London in the early sixties, showed it plainly enough. He showed it even more plainly in the decoration of his room, which was founded almost entirely upon Japanese principles: light uniform colours upon the walls, an extreme simplicity, and a carefully placed occasional Japanese fan.

It took more than ten years for this mode to be popularized, and in the process vulgarized, and then it had become blended with the rest of the Æsthetic doctrine. This doctrine, which was for a time a serious challenge to the dominance of fashion—in particular, to the dominance of French fashion—must be considered in some detail. For the moment it is sufficient to note that it was an English influence, and its power in France was a matter of reimportation. It stands apart from the main current of dress.

BOARDING THE YACHT
J. J. Tissot. 1873

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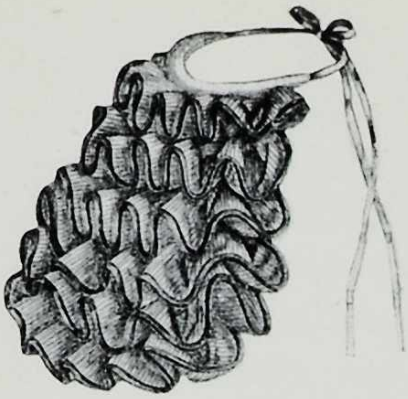
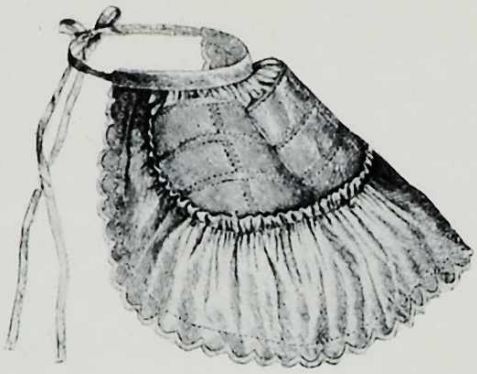
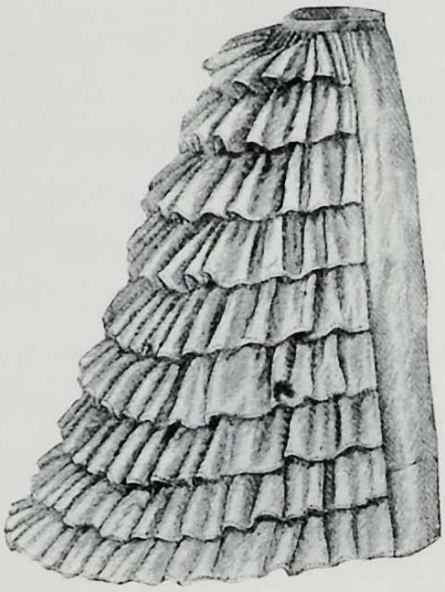
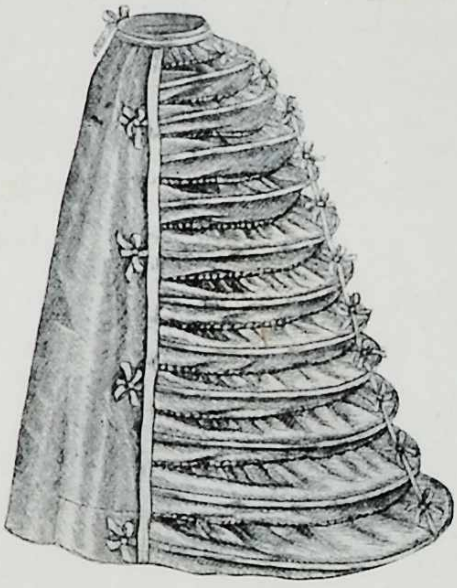
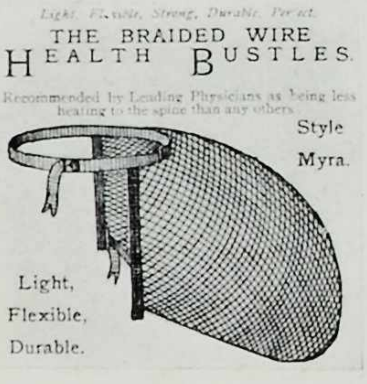
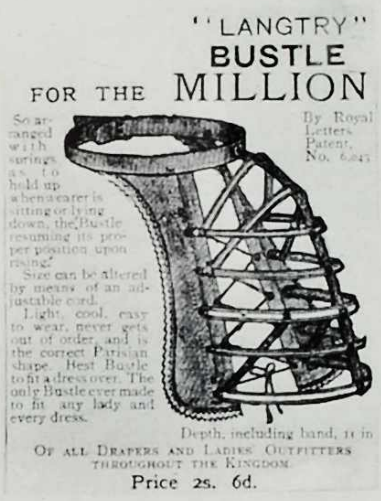












(1) Horsehair and Dimity Dress-improvers, 1872
(2) Demi-crinoline, 1873
(3) Bustles, 1887

That main current, from 1870 to about 1887, is the history of the bustle, or rather of two bustles, separated by a period when dresses were extremely tight over the hips. We have seen that the first bustle was little more in effect than an attempt to get rid of the extra fullness of the skirt at the back, once the crinoline had been removed, by bunching it up into a kind of pannier. But once a form has established itself its natural tendency is to push itself to an extreme. In the early seventies therefore the bustle got bigger and bigger, and a large pad had to be inserted in order to make the dress stick out sufficiently at the back and to give the fashionable line.

At first such dresses were comparatively loose in front also, but with that infallible instinct for seductiveness which is one of the major springs of fashion, *couturiers* soon discovered that the fullness of skirts at the back enabled them to be drawn with extreme tightness over the hips in front, so outlining the figure. The bustle now took on a new aspect. It was no longer the mere overplus of train bunched up. It provided the leverage, as it were, for a straining of cloth in the front of the body. In 1876 we begin to find in *Punch* jokes about ladies whose skirts are so tight that they can neither sit down nor climb stairs, and this in spite of the apparently large amount of stuff of which the skirt is made. Incidentally it is amusing to note that in the middle seventies a chair was invented with a back raised from the seat by several side pillars, the pillars at the back being removed in order to allow for the protuberance of the extra quantity of materials.

In 1877 tight-lacing became as ferocious as it had been in the early thirties, some ladies succeeding in reducing their waists to a circumference of nineteen inches. But even over the best-fitting corsets it was difficult to draw the skirt as tightly as fashion demanded, and so about the year 1878 we find a new development in costume. The corset, for the first time since the eighteenth century, begins to be worn over the skirt, to form, in fact, part of the bodice. It was very tight, and ran down to a sharp point in front. The skirt then appeared, so to say, from underneath it, and was adorned with drapery, the purpose of which was to widen the apparent size of the hips in order to make the waist look smaller

yet. This was done by the horizontal line which is typical of 1880. The hips themselves were smooth, the bustle of the early seventies having slipped down, as it were, half-way to the ground, instead of flouncing out from the waist as it had done before. The flounce became more and more elaborate, and as the eighties progressed gradually rose again, the back line of the skirt moving as on a pivot, till in 1885 it stuck out rigidly a distance of eighteen inches, or even two feet. This is the second bustle, essentially different in character from the first, but perhaps even more unfortunate in its effect on the female figure.

Like the first bustle, the second could only be kept in place by some kind of stiff sub-structure, and this sub-structure of the bustle underwent the same fundamental change as the previous sub-structure of the crinoline. In a word, it ceased to be a pad and became a wire cage. That this similarity of development was recognized by its inventors is shown by the name which was given to it: it was called the 'crinolette.' It had made its appearance as early as the summer of 1881, when *Punch*, that invaluable record of the manners and costumes of the English upper middle classes, published a poem entitled *The Chant of the Crinolette*:

Tell me not in honeyed accents Crinoline will come once more,
That my soul must feel the trammels that I felt in days of yore;
Modesty, I own, forbids me to the public to reveal
All the tortures that I suffered in the period of steel;
Philistine I was then, doubtless, and those days would fain forget;
Why revive the old wire-fencing, though you call it Crinolette?

Who's responsible, I ask you, for this strange portentous birth
Of an ancient hideous fashion, and an echo answers "Worth." . . .
Then again, at Fashion's dictates we must give up fringe of hair,
Which Æsthetic folks have stated is the thing we ought to wear. . . .
We'll not yield without a struggle, so, fair Ladies, do not fret—
Stick to Fourteenth-century fringes, and abjure the Crinolette.

Two influences were to mitigate this state of things: first the Æsthetic movement, which may be placed somewhere near the middle seventies, and secondly sport, which does not really attain any startling proportions until the eighties.

The Æsthetic movement is a very curious study, and its history is so complicated that it is difficult to disentangle the threads. In one sense it was the pale ghost of the Romantic enthusiasm of the twenties and thirties. In another it was due to Rossetti's personal taste and early pictures. It was, indeed, the Pre-Raphaelite movement emerging into public consciousness, not as a mere doctrine of how to paint, but as a gospel of how to live. To the Æsthetes of the seventies, however, the foundation of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood in 1848 lay too far back in time to be consciously remembered. The original band had been practically dispersed by 1854, but Rossetti remained, and when Burne-Jones, who at Oxford had shared rooms with William Morris, came to London in 1856 his first act was to become a disciple of Rossetti. Without Morris the whole movement might have been nothing more than a small eddy in the history of easel-painting. But Morris was a practical man with a passion for the crafts. He aimed at nothing less than the reform of the entire existing system of interior decoration and architecture, and when he found that he could not get the objects of everyday life made to his satisfaction he determined to make them himself, from pumps to chairs and stained-glass windows. The firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. was started in 1862, but its influence at first was confined to a very small circle. The general public regarded it as a mere eccentricity. Much of the early work of the firm was done for neo-Gothic churches, and it was not until 1869 that Morris received his first commission for non-ecclesiastical interior decoration—the west room of the restaurant at South Kensington Museum. Meanwhile Whistler, full of his Japanese enthusiasm, had also met Rossetti in the early sixties, and it was probably he who inoculated Rossetti with the Japanese enthusiasm. It is doubtful which of the two started the craze for blue china.

It took more than ten years for these influences to filter through to the general public. In *Punch* the first drawing of an Æsthetic room with fans mounted on a screen occurs in 1875, and in the second half of the following year the craze for blue china is satirized. In early 1878 there is a picture of an Æsthetic piano decorated all over with painted sunflowers, and by the end of the

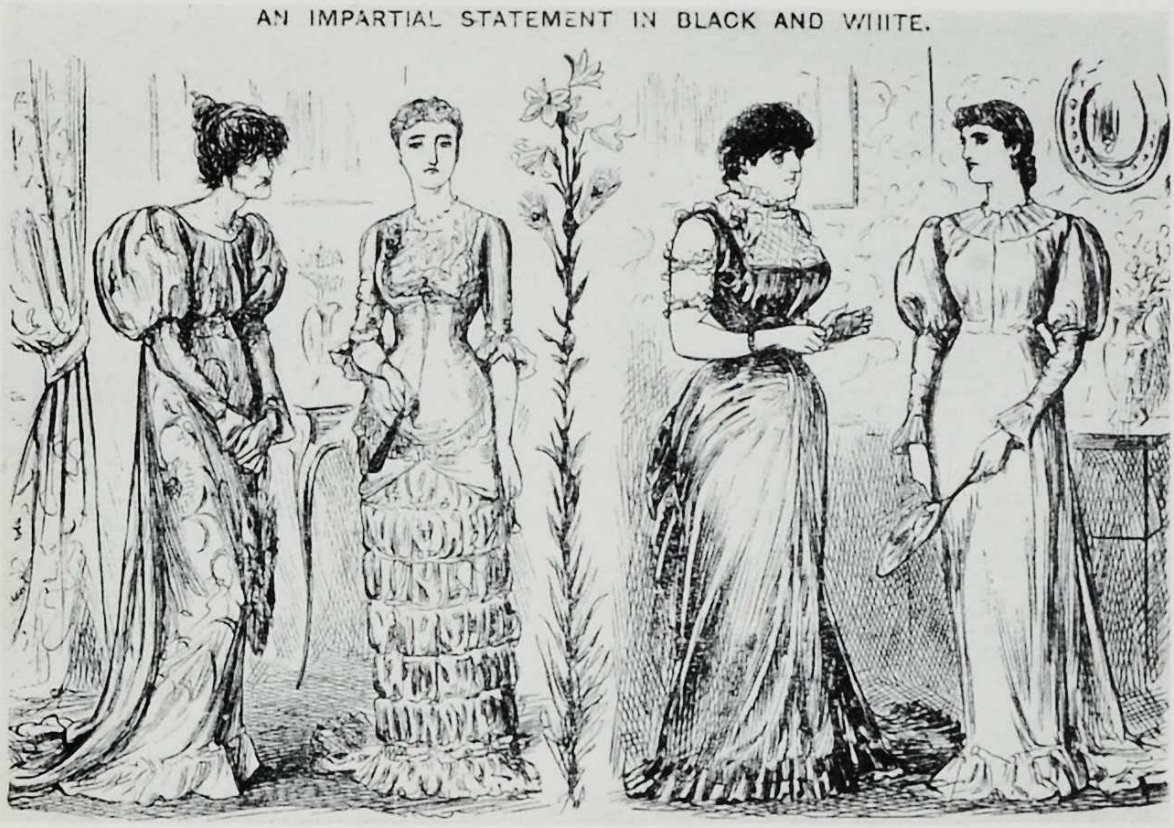
same year we have good evidence to believe that the Æsthetic costume, as something special to those who had adopted the new doctrine, had become almost standardized.

1878 is a great year in the history of Æstheticism, for it was the year in which Oscar Wilde ceased to be an undergraduate. His fame had already spread far beyond the limits of the university, but his actual apostleship was henceforth to be much more effective. Wilde had a genius for publicity—an even greater genius than his rival, Whistler—and it was not long before the word Æsthete was in everybody's mouth. *Punch*, on the whole hostile to the Æsthetes, was fair enough to publish contrasting pictures of the good Æsthetic dress and the bad fashionable costume, as well as of the bad Æsthetic dress and the good fashionable costume.

What *was* the Æsthetic dress, and how did it come about? For men it consisted of knee-breeches, loose flowing tie, a velvet jacket, and a wideawake hat. In fact, it was a polite modification of the French artist costume of 1830. The women's costume was a kind of mixture of the Empire, with its straight-flowing lines and loose drapery, and the eighteen-thirties, with their large sleeves. This, of course, was not a conscious imitation. It was a mingling, in the minds of its wearers, of the dress of the medieval heroine and that of the heroine of the Renaissance. The Æsthetic lady wore flat shoes, no corsets, a loose robe embroidered with large sunflowers, and brushed her hair forward over her eyes. It was an attempt to imitate the vague, no-period costume of the ladies in Burne-Jones's pictures, and on the right kind of figure must have looked well enough; but there went with it an affected manner of walking, a slouch and a droop, an affected manner of talking, and a fearful affectation of judgment and taste. The word 'precious' was adopted from Ruskin and used out of its context on all occasions. 'Too utterly utter' became a catch-phrase of the day. There is no doubt that to the more Philistine human being the Æsthetes were very trying indeed.

Yet there was a value in their action, if only as a protest. Few people will now deny that the female costumes of the late seventies were neither commodious nor particularly graceful, although in

Swells and Æsthetes
From *Punch*, September 21, 1878
By kind permission of "Punch"



Æsthetic Lady and Woman of Fashion: Woman of Fashion and Æsthetic Lady
From *Punch*, April 9, 1881
By kind permission of "Punch"

Les Planches, Trouville, 1885
From *La Vie Parisienne*

the last chapter we will discuss the danger of such judgments, when sufficient allowance is not made for what we have called the "gap in appreciation." The Æsthetes, if they hadn't been so peculiar, might even have succeeded in introducing a more rational style of dress and a better colour-scheme. Their eyes were hurt, and no wonder, by the extraordinary garishness of colours in fashionable dress at the period. Stories began to appear in the illustrated papers that Æsthetes refused to go into dinner with girls who affected aniline dyes and mingled green trimmings on their skirts with magenta ribbons in their hair. Unless the girls were very pretty, or the supper irresistible, it almost seems as if the Æsthete, in this instance, at least, was right.

We have spoken of the sunflower, which was as persistent a *motif* in Æsthetic decoration as the convolvulus was to be in the *art nouveau* of 1900. A new *motif* now entered in the peacock feather, the vogue of which may be said, without any hesitation, to have been due to the notoriety of Whistler's peacock room, just finished in 1878. Peacocks' feathers became an essential part of advanced *décor*. In 1881 we find two Æsthetic ladies in *Punch* rejoicing that in "dear old Kensington" peacock feathers only cost a penny apiece.

In the early eighties the battle between Æsthete and Philistine was raging fiercely. In 1881 *Patience* appeared, in which Bunthorne nightly told a packed house how he walked down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in his medieval hand. In 1882 Wilde set out on his famous lecture tour to America, and *Punch* announced gleefully, in a parody of Ossian which is still amusing, that the Son of Cultchar had gone to the Land of Strangers. But Wilde on his return abandoned the extreme Æsthetic position; at least, he no longer wore the regulation Æsthetic garments, but he was too closely associated with the movement for it not to suffer by his final catastrophe. Peacock feathers in the hands of Beardsley became the badge of a rather sinister secret society. They vanished from respectable drawing-rooms.

On the whole it must be admitted that as a dress reform the Æsthetic movement was a failure. It was never adopted by more than a fraction of the *intelligentsia*, although perhaps it did bring

violent contrasts and too complicated dressmaking into discredit and opened the way for the use of Liberty stuffs. Morris and Burne-Jones had never been associated with the more doubtful second phase of Æstheticism, and their influence continued to the end of the century.

Chapter VI

THE NEW WOMAN

It would be difficult to define the New Woman with any exactitude, or to say precisely when she was new. There have been several New Women in the course of history. Indeed, it may be said that whenever civilization reaches a certain point of development the question of the independence of women arises. Their Rights become subjects for debate, their Wrongs a pressing social problem. In the post-Augustan Roman Empire women attained a degree of social and even economic freedom comparable with that which they enjoy to-day. They lost it again during the Dark Ages, as they will always lose it when civilization collapses and the will of the stronger is all that counts.

The troubadours, with their deification of woman, placed her upon a pedestal and made her into a goddess, but she was a captive goddess. The lady in the castle may have had a dozen knights competing for the honour of wearing her favour in their helmets, but she was not free in the modern sense at all. The French Revolution, with its insistence on the rights of man, gave rise, as a kind of backwash, to some small agitation in favour of the rights of women. This had little immediate result, however, for the mid-Victorian woman found herself part of a system as patriarchal and tyrannous as had ever existed.

Whatever slight modifications in dress and manners may have been introduced by a George Sand or a Lola Montez, so long as the *bourgeois* ideal was in the ascendant the independent woman, the woman who wished to live her own life, was necessarily a rarity. Even under the Second Empire in France, when a new wave of Romanticism swept over the country, the New Woman was not much in evidence, even in literature. There is little that is characteristic of her in the novels of the favourite author of the Imperial period, Octave Feuillet. In fact, polite society seemed to be utterly unconscious of the new movement of Realism which

had already started. In the novel *Renée Mauperin*, which appeared in 1864, the brothers Goncourt set out to depict the young people of the period. They wished to show *la jeune bourgeoisie* of their day —in particular the modern young girl: "*telle que l'éducation garçonnière des dernières années l'a faite.*" The very turn of the phrase is surprising enough in 1864. It is only fair to add that the novel of the Goncourts was completely unnoticed by the general public.

The New Woman, in the sense in which the term is usually used, is a creation of the eighteen-eighties, and the chief liberating impulse came from the new enthusiasm for sport.

In the earlier part of the century the only sport in which women had been able to indulge was that of riding, and we have seen how this in its turn played a part in modifying female costume. But riding was always an aristocratic privilege; it was scarcely a common practice, even among the upper middle classes. In the seventies, however, three new sports arose: roller-skating, making it possible to skate all the year round instead of merely in winter (for artificial ice-rinks had not yet been invented), bicycling, and lawn tennis. Lawn tennis has now become so universal that the word 'lawn' has been dropped, although old-fashioned people are still to be found who on meeting the word 'tennis' resent its being applied to lawn tennis, and are compelled to speak of 'real' tennis to designate the older game. But it was a work of genius to bring tennis out of the tennis court and allow it to be played in the open air.

At first, no doubt, it was not a very strenuous pastime, if only because of the clothes in which it was played. There was a prejudice against lawn tennis for men: schoolmasters saw in the new game a rival to cricket, and referred to it contemptuously as 'pat ball.' It is a pity they could not foresee the championship match of to-day, which is infinitely more strenuous than cricket and requires just as much skill. In the early days, rather, the strength of tennis was that it was so refined: it fitted so easily into the open-air summer life of the English middle classes. It could be played on a lawn of comparatively moderate size, and it provided a new opportunity for that parade of eligible daughters which was one of the main preoccupations of the British matron.

From the point of view of the latter, what could be more desirable than a new social custom which could be practised without great expense, which brought young people together, and which enabled them to make friends under the eyes of their elders. Small wonder that the new game rapidly gained in popularity. The invaluable *Punch*, which records like a seismograph every tremor in the social atmosphere, begins to make references to tennis in the middle seventies. It was conscious from the first of the difficulties of playing in the encumbering feminine costumes of the day, and it even offered a suggestion in 1877 that men should be handicapped while playing by having scarves tied round their knees! In the late seventies tennis competes with the Æsthetic movement for the attention of the satirist, but while Æstheticism was seen on the whole through hostile eyes, the new enthusiasm for tennis, and for sport generally, found nothing but approval. There are jokes about girls who are so fit and well developed that they could easily knock down their own fathers or their own husbands. The new athleticism—we must remember that it was after all of a very mild type—found an ardent champion in *Punch*. We may therefore conclude that it was not looked at askance by the main body of middle-class English opinion.

Reference has already been made to the sport of skating, and illustrated newspapers in England seem to have joked about 'rinkomania' as early as 1875. Indoor skating has remained a favourite pastime ever since, although it has not been fashionable throughout that period, but has risen and fallen in the social scale for reasons very difficult to discover. It seems to have been fashionable up to the end of the century, to have enjoyed a new burst of chic popularity just before 1914, and to have had a revival in the form of ice-skating in the late nineteen-twenties and early thirties. Its influence on costume has been very slight, but exercised constantly in the same direction—towards making skirts rather shorter than they would otherwise have been.

Both skating and tennis, however, fade into insignificance in comparison with the immense influence wielded by the invention of the bicycle—the bicycle, which in the magnitude of its effects

has been compared with the discovery of fire or the invention of printing.

So long as the bicycle was the penny-farthing, with one immense and one little wheel, it could not be ridden by women at all. In a *Punch* number of 1883 we find a lady referring to bicycling as an essentially manly sport: "Women can't do *that*, you know, not even with divided skirts." But improvements were not long delayed, and about the year 1890 the bicycle suddenly began to find riders everywhere, in spite of its clumsy and primitive form, its solid tyres, and its lack of gearing. More astonishing still, it became for a short time extremely fashionable, and without this snobbism of 'the mode' would probably have taken much longer to make progress in public favour. It was taken up by no less a person than the Prince de Sagan, the acknowledged *arbiter elegantiarum* of Paris.

The word passed like lightning among the riders in the Bois de Boulogne. "*Avez-vous vu le Prince?*"

"*Pas encore.*"

"*Il est à bicyclette à la Potinière.*"

"*Pas possible!*"

However, there he was, sure enough, clad in a check suit, and on his head a straw hat "*d'une forme absolument personnelle.*"

From that moment the bicycle was launched, and a society for the cultivation of the sport was formed under the chairmanship of the Duc d'Uzés. In 1891 a magazine was started, then another, and a third. Men of letters took the matter up, and went into ecstasies over the structure of the new mechanical invention. They praised its sincerity, the obvious working of its wheels and cogs, its lightness and purpose in design. Some of their praises have a strangely modern ring. It was, indeed, nothing less than the foundation of a new æsthetic, that 'functionalism' of which we have recently heard so much.

But the praise of literary men might have been ineffective without the support of the fashionable, who adopted the new craze with enthusiasm. They met principally in the Bois, between the Porte Dauphine and the Porte Maillot, so that this particular avenue became known as l'Allée des Vélos. In London the place

of preference was Battersea Park, and the favourite time Sunday morning. Fashionable people had their bicycles taken to the park by their servants. They then drove down in their carriages, suitably attired for the sport, mounted their bicycles and rode solemnly round and round.

The importance of the invention, however, is simply that it was adopted by women with as much enthusiasm as by men. If only men had become cyclists the bicycle might have had no more influence on manners than the typewriter, although that too has not been without its effect. But the fact that women became cyclists imposed an entirely new set of problems, which were to go on agitating both fashion-designers and moralists for many years to come.

For what should be the costume of a lady cyclist? It was obviously impossible for her to wear with comfort or even with safety the long, trailing robes of the period. She was compelled either to wear a shorter skirt or to adopt frankly the knickerbockers of male cyclists. Some of the immensely voluminous knickerbockers of the period look very strange to modern eyes, but they represented a real revolution in feminine dress. What all Mrs Bloomer's eloquence had failed to obtain was quickly won by the bicycle. Women wore breeches at last.

It may be imagined that such a revolution did not pass without clamour and protest. The new pantaloons were denounced as shameless. Did they not expose the feminine calf to the eyes of all who cared to see? The bicycle was classed as inelegant, and those women who rode on it as anti-feminine. Writers and artists were divided. Forain denounced the knickerbocker suit as absurd. Many women, particularly some celebrated actresses, however, accepted it; Yvette Guilbert was warmly in its favour. But praise and blame seemed to have equally little effect. The mischief, if mischief it was, was done, and although the bicycle ceased to be chic about 1896, as suddenly as it had become so, it began to filter down through the *bourgeoisie* to the lower classes, and its influence on manners was therefore only the greater.

It meant the discovery of the open road, forgotten since the advent of the railway. It meant an effort to escape from the town at week-ends, and therefore led insensibly but inevitably to a

decline in churchgoing. It led to the discovery of picturesque corners, forgotten towns, and picnic places. It anticipated, perhaps with a purer pleasure, all the joys of motoring. More important still, it began those difficulties of parental control which have been made insuperable by the invention of the internal-combustion engine. If your daughter had a bicycle, how could you possibly oversee her movements? How could you prevent her going off on expeditions with young men? How could you tell what she did when she was with them? The chaperon suddenly found herself left behind in the quite literal sense. She could not keep up with youth—again in a sense so literal as to be almost comic. The bicycle was cheap, and gradually became cheaper and cheaper, so that there was soon hardly any class of the community which could not afford it. The rolling wheel seemed a suitable symbol for so great a revolution.

There is a curious unity in the general lines of fashion throughout the eighteen-nineties, and nothing like so drastic a change occurs as that which characterized the transition from the smooth-hipped fashion of 1880 to the extravagant horizontal bustles of 1885. Throughout the nineties the skirts remained the same—bell-shaped, or rather like an arum-lily inverted, smooth over the hips, and flaring out widely at the hem. The only way in which fashion shows any important modifications between 1890 and 1900 is in the matter of sleeves.

Their evolution is very curious during this period. At the end of the eighties the sleeve was set in the bodice in such a way as to produce a slight gathered effect, a little peak of material formed at each shoulder. This was seized upon by that spirit of fashion which always seems to work by accentuating some possibly accidental detail, and in 1890 it became the mode to make the sleeve rise several inches above the shoulders like an epaulette on end. At first such sleeves were tight, but at the end of 1890 the part of the sleeve which covered the upper arm showed signs of puffing out. This expansion of the upper sleeve continued, and by 1893 the true leg of mutton had arrived, its effect accentuated by frills and flounces, sometimes in the form of large revers, starting from the bodice and lying along the shoulders. Soon sleeves were so large

that cushions were necessary in order to keep them in place, and so essential were such large sleeves considered that even fancy dresses had them, and they were not entirely absent from stage attempts to reproduce historical costume as accurately as possible. The only historical costume which this obsession would have made it easier to reproduce was that of the eighteen-thirties, when the sleeves went through a similar evolution, expanding from the little puffed Elizabethan sleeves on the shoulder to a form very like that of 1895, which was the year in which sleeves reached their largest dimensions.

The parallel, however, can be pursued no farther, for in the thirties the wide sleeve was modified, when fashion had grown tired of it, the wide portion being allowed to slip down towards the wrist, so that in the late thirties it was the forearm and not the upper arm which was covered with a voluminous band. In the nineties the curve of rise and fall was much simpler, the process consisting merely of a gradual reversal, during the second half of the decade, of the evolution which had taken place during the first. In 1896 leg-of-mutton sleeves were already slightly smaller. In 1897 they were smaller still, and in 1898 they were purely vestigial. In 1899 they were a mere gathering on the shoulders, and in the following year they had vanished altogether. It was only when sleeves had become quite smooth over the shoulders and tight at the wrist that dress-designers seem to have thought of making the lower half of the sleeve baggy. There were distinct signs of this in 1901, and the sleeve which was produced is very typical of the next decade.

It is probably merely a matter of alliteration that the nineties rather than the eighties or the nineteen-hundreds should have earned the adjective 'naughty'; yet naughty they are in the retrospective imaginations of most people who have any taste for the flavour of an epoch. Beardsley, with his black candles, his ambiguous elegance, his leering faces, hangs like a shadow over the whole decade, which was also, if we but care to remember it, the decade of Kipling and George Bernard Shaw. But it seems to be accepted that the end of a century is always decadent, always a little world-weary, always a little perverse. *Fin de siècle* means all

these things, and the importance of such a notion lies in this, that the peop e who live at the end of a century are themselves swayed by it. Peope behave to a surprising extent in accordance with the dominant ideas of their time, and the nineties were undoubtedly filled with the fumes of the final fermentation of Æstheticism.

Some of the effects of that fermentation were not likely to be of much concern to women. Their only result was to terrify still further those who saw in the *fin de siècle* spirit a threat to all the canons of decency which had been upheld throughout the long Victorian reign. Yet the period of the nineties was marked by a definite revolt of woman, and those who imagined that the new enthusiasm for athleticism would burn itself out harmlessly in croquet parties and tennis parties under the eye of a chaperon were speedily undeceived. Young men no longer married as early as they had done a generation before, and those surplus women who were destined to remain unmarried, who in the Victorian period proper would have been content to accept a life of dependency as companions or poor relations, now began to strike out for themselves, to accept, however timidly, positions in offices, to make their first assaults upon the professions, and to enter into a competition with man of a new and purely economic kind.

In this revolt of woman literature certainly played a large part; the influence of the Naturalistic school, headed by Zola, was beginning to make itself felt among the larger public and it was one of the canons of this school to leave nothing undiscussed. In particular it showed an interest in the psychology of woman which was very disturbing to those who had comfortably imagined that nice women had no psychology at all, and that those who were not nice were hardly fit subjects for discussion.

Another literary influence was shortly to be added to that of the Naturalistic school: the influence of Northern Europe, which was felt even in France. Between 1893, the date of the visit of the Russian fleet to Toulon, and 1896, the year of the Tsar's visit to Paris, there was an immense enthusiasm in France for anything Russian. This had some slight influence on fashion, and helped to bring in fur trimmings of all kinds. It had much more influence on habits of thought in France, by introducing to the French

reading public a whole group of writers, Tolstoy at their head, who had hitherto been almost unknown to them. In 1888 the Théâtre Libre had given Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness*. From 1890 onward Antoine presented to the Parisian public the whole of the dramatic works of Ibsen, with their passionate vindication of woman's right to her own spiritual independence, her revolt against the domination of man in society. The more conservative of the critics and the great part of the public treated such plays with laughing contempt, finding them either shocking or ridiculously naïve, but their influence made its way, none the less, helped by an intellectual snobbism which was at its height in the middle nineties. To live one's own life became the watchword, not only of Ibsen's heroines, but of many young women in other countries, even in France, with its powerful Latin tradition.

It is something of a curiosity that Æstheticism, the doctrine of art for art's sake, should have made its appearance in France so late. The movement had many strands, but one of its main impulses undoubtedly came from William Morris. As so often happens, however, it was not Morris's taste in interior decoration which finally had the most influence, but rather that of his disciple and collaborator, Burne-Jones. Morris's style was too brisk, too medieval, too *terre-à-terre*: that of Burne-Jones, with the slight namby-pamby element which was inseparable from it, appealed to the French as a reaction against the crudities of realism and the Naturalistic school.

Burne-Jones himself was introduced to Paris by the Comtesse de Loynes and made many disciples, while the vogue of Oscar Wilde contributed to the same result. Paris suddenly witnessed the appearance of the Æsthetes, as London had witnessed it a whole decade before. Those who had a horror of vulgarity proclaimed the self-sufficing validity of the work of art. There were ultra-refined dandies like the Comte de Montesquiou, and women who walked about with flowers in their hands, with scarves on their shoulders, and hair dressed *à la Botticelli*. There was a preference for the fluid line, broken curves, forms of drooping plants such as the lily and the convolvulus—all, in fact, that goes to make up the elements of *l'art nouveau*.

Chapter VII

HIGH LIFE, OR GARDEN PARTY AND CASINO

Social historians are in the habit of informing their readers that in any epoch with which they happen to be dealing Society is no more. The rigid hierarchy of yesterday is gone; the influx of the *nouveaux-riches* has blurred the old aristocratic demarcation; only money and not birth now counts. The curious thing is that this seems to have happened so often. There were Elizabethan complaints about the difference between the old English gentleman and the new English gentleman; there were *nouveaux-riches* in Molière's day; those who made money in the South Sea Bubble forced their way into the ranks of what had hitherto been considered good society; those who had made fortunes in India did the same thing at the end of the eighteenth century, and the new manufacturers in the early years of the nineteenth.

In France the Directoire and the Empire introduced a whole new class of speculators and adventurers who, because they had money to spend, occupied an increasing amount of public attention and pushed the old families into the background. The process, indeed, has been going on since the beginning of time, and it is well for aristocracies that it should be so—otherwise they would undoubtedly die out. Yet up to the end of the nineteenth century there was in England a certain solidarity about the aristocratic classes, reinforced, as they may frequently have been, by successful manufacturers and the like. But now there was something new. The astonishing success of the mines of Kimberley brought the diamond merchants into Park Lane. There was an influx of foreigners, with ways of life differing from those of the English upper class and upper-middle class. If Society was ever in deliquescence it was certainly so in the nearly nineteen-hundreds.

All the old standards seemed to be breaking down: the ownership of land no longer carried the same weight as it had done

THE HOLBORN SKATING RINK, 1876

By courtesy of "The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News"

GARDEN PARTY AND CASINO, 1902

By courtesy of "The Illustrated London News"

before; the stigma attaching to trade was gradually being removed, so long as the trade was on a sufficiently extensive scale; and the pure financier, the man who juggled with money, began to make his way to the front. As a result English life in the decade from 1900 to 1910 certainly shows many characteristics which it had never shown before. The chic began to replace the *comme il faut*, and a new era of extravagance set in which led many popular preachers of the day (and fashionable preachers had never been more popular) to talk of the fall of Babylon and Nineveh. Certainly in England wealth had not been worn with such ostentation for many years, and there were not lacking voices to prophesy that such an era of self-indulgence must inevitably end in national disaster. It was from some points of view the English equivalent of the French eighteen-sixties—the years preceding the fall of the Second Empire. There was a new cynicism, a new corruption, a determination to enjoy life, and a general air of unrestraint which is sometimes spoken of as the break-up of Victorianism.

Such it was, no doubt, in a quite literal sense. So long as the old Queen was alive her influence had been directed towards maintaining a standard of rigid respectability. It was quite plain that although Edward VII kept up the standards of kingship as high as any monarch who had ever occupied the English throne, his personal tastes were by no means so rigid as those of his mother. He considered, rightly or wrongly, that a king has the right to choose his own friends, and the friends he chose were moneyed and cosmopolitan rather than landed and traditionally English. In the new twentieth-century world it was not birth but wealth and fashion that mattered. Those who set the pace had money to spend. They might, in the traditional manner, buy houses in the country with parks of broad acres, but they were only week-end country gentlemen; their interest was not in the land, but in the City. Under their influence there was a new orientation of English upper-class life.

In this new orientation the influence of America was felt for the first time. Ever since the Civil War the wealth of America had been growing, and New York by the beginning of the century had already thrown up a new aristocracy, composed partly, it is

true, of the old Social Register families, but also, in no small part, of those who had made fortunes (perhaps larger fortunes than had ever been accumulated before in the history of the world) in railroads, steel, oil, or even pork-packing. Rich Americans began to come over to Europe in increasing numbers, and they brought with them, to the surprise of Englishmen, standards of life higher than those obtaining in England. They came over with no sense of inferiority. They were extremely civilized and sophisticated, and they were also very wealthy. It began to occur to impoverished scions of English aristocratic houses that they might do worse than wed an American heiress, at one and the same time obtaining a vital and attractive wife and re-establishing the family fortunes on a sound foundation. The Americans, on the other hand, were by no means denuded of the snobbery of birth, and many a Yankee father who prided himself upon his Republicanism was more than willing to see his well-dowered daughter assume a European title.

A large number of English peers married American heiresses, but in the years which we are considering an even larger number married popular actresses, for the days had long gone by when such unions were regarded as *mésalliances*, except by very old-fashioned people. Lavinia Fenton, the original Polly Peachum, and the first English actress to marry a peer, had, indeed, been united to her Duke of Bolton in the middle of the eighteenth century, but only after living with him as his mistress for twenty years. There had been various cases throughout the nineteenth century, some successful, some less successful, but none of them taken for granted. In the Edwardian age it was the ambition of every musical-comedy chorus girl to win the right to a coronet, and if most of them were doomed to disappointment, at least enough of them succeeded to attract many of the most beautiful girls in England into the ranks of the lighter stage.

The prestige of the theatre has perhaps never stood higher in England and France than during the first ten years of the twentieth century. Jules Bertaut, in his extremely well-documented study of *l'opinion et les mœurs* under the Third Republic, speaking of Paris, in the period under discussion, calls it roundly "Cabotinville," the

actors' metropolis. It seemed for a while as if the Parisians lived in and by the theatre. The 'first night,' or *répétition générale*, became a social occasion; the passionate discussion of the merits or demerits of the favourite dramatists the most usual form of conversation. There was a halo of glory around all things theatrical such as perhaps they had never known. Popular dramatists attained an unheard-of celebrity; actors and actresses —not yet thrown into the shade by the triumphs of cinema stars— were at the highest point of their prestige. Bertaut remarks:

> The painter, who had reigned over the mode under Marshal MacMahon, was annihilated. The novelist, who had tasted such heights of fame in the days of Zola and Bourget, was thrust aside. Not only was the dramatic author extremely well known; he also became immensely rich. A successful play became for all writers the royal road to fortune.

Bertaut makes the interesting suggestion that this was due in part to a social revolution, the slowing down of the old Society life, with its private receptions and its after-dinner balls. Already the young people of the day were bored with the formal amusements which had satisfied their predecessors. It became the mode to amuse oneself outside the family circle, and this impulse undoubtedly contributed to the success of the theatre. Another influence which must be noted was undoubtedly that of the Jews who have always loved the theatre passionately, who found in the promotion of plays admirable scope for their financial talents, and who were never more powerful than in the period from 1900 to 1910.

The Théâtre de la Renaissance was from 1902 to 1909 directed by Lucien Guitry, who shared with André Brûlé and Max Dearly an enthusiastic popularity, which was not without influence on the psychology of manners. These men, and Dearly in particular, played innumerable rôles, which had this in common, that they represented the successful, and indeed irresistible, love-making of a man who was no longer young. In fact, up to the war of 1914, which saw the triumphant return of the dictatorship of youth, in love and marriage "*la passion*," in Bertaut's admirable phrase, "*se porte vieux.*"

"*La passion se porte vieux*"! It might almost be the motto of the period under discussion. It was the age of the 'fine' woman, of the mature form and well-rounded contour, and every fashion of the period might actually have been designed to set her off to advantage and to handicap the young girl. The modes of the period required a woman to be tall and statuesque, full-bosomed, with the bust thrown forward by the action of the S-shaped corset. It is a curious fact that even the English chorus girls conformed to this type, and were almost invariably of an amplitude which would effectively prevent them from getting any job on the stage to-day. Fashions were almost excessively feminine, and, what was even more important in their conspiracy against the very young woman, they were all extremely expensive and elaborate.

A writer of fashion notes in 1907 remarks:

> Dress has become more luxurious than ever. Investments have sagged all along the line; taxes have increased and multiplied [It is fortunate that this writer had not the gift of prophecy!], but there is still plenty of money in some quarters, and the cost and elaboration of attire to-day is one of the ways in which this interesting fact reveals itself. It is the lavish use of embroideries that accounts for the enhanced expenditure on dress. The rich and beautiful brocades, the fine velvets and lustrous satins which made the highest ideal of a costly court train of ten or fifteen years ago, did not cost nearly as much as the elaborate hand embroideries of the moment's ambition. It is impossible in either words or black-and-white pictures to give an adequate idea of the beauty of these embroideries. The flowers depicted by the needle are as effective in the mass, as delicate and dainty in minute detail, as their natural prototypes. From a distance evening gowns seem a mass of silver, opalescent gold, or moonlight sequins.

The writer finishes with a lament that these embroideries can still only be purchased abroad.

More striking even than the embroidery was the quantity of lace which was considered necessary. Perhaps not since the days of William III had so much been used. Lace collars and collarettes, lace sleeves, lace plastrons, lace over-bodices, and, of course, lace petticoats, only to be glimpsed occasionally, but requiring, none the less, the finest workmanship—there was

hardly any part of woman's dress which was not adorned with this most expensive form of decoration. Real lace in such quantities being often unattainable, and machine-made lace being still somewhat despised, a compromise was discovered in Irish crochet, for which there was a considerable vogue, especially in the year 1907. Both Parisian and London dressmakers, we are told, regarded Irish crochet with the highest favour. For high evening bodices or for dressy 'afternoon blouses' there was nothing more fashionable than a complete coat of Irish crochet.

> If the coat is built thus entirely of the heavier sort of Irish crochet, resembling a *guipure* lace, it is best to place a lining of chiffon between the fitted silk or satin lining and the lace, as this gives a softer effect and is a great improvement. Coloured chiffon under the *point d'Irlande*, when the rest of the dress permits of the introduction of a colour, has an excellent effect, and is seen through the interstices of the crochet.[1]

If it was possible to imitate lace by means of crochet it was extremely difficult to find a substitute for another great item of expense in the *toilette* of a lady of fashion in the period under discussion. That other item was feathers, which were almost as necessary as lace itself. Hats will be dealt with in a separate chapter. It is sufficient here to note that almost every hat in the typical year 1907 had at least one large ostrich plume; some fashionable hats had as many as five or six. Is it fantastic to see in this fashion a hint of the political and financial preoccupation with South Africa so typical of the period? In any event, plumes were much worn, not only in hats but in feather boas round the neck. Nothing is so characteristic of the period as the feather boa, the revived fashion for which was sometimes attributed to the patron-

[1] Crochet, now fallen so completely into neglect, was once a favourite method of passing the time in the home circle. It was invented by a French-Spanish lady named Mlle Reigo early in the nineteenth century, and the idea came to her from seeing the harvesters make chains of straw with the points of their reaping hooks wherewith to bind over their ricks to keep their wheat together. She procured a small hook and tried what she could do with a similar chain in fine cotton, and by degrees she evolved the whole art of crochet. She instructed the nuns at the Blackrock Convent, Dublin. Many of the designs which she taught them were still in use three-quarters of a century later. They also reproduced as nearly as possible the patterns of fine antique laces such as old *point d'Alençon* and *point d'Angleterre*. Sometimes the crochet *motifs* were arranged in their order on tissue-paper and joined together by the needle in true point-lace style.

age of Queen Alexandra, although, says a writer of the period, "it is not everybody who can boast the swan-like throat of our graceful Queen, to which a full, fluffy adornment is particularly suitable." The best feather boas were made entirely of ostrich plumes, and were very full behind the head and very long, sometimes costing as much as ten guineas. Those who did not wish to spend so much fell back on thick light ruffles of muslin or Breton net. But there was really no substitute for the boa.

Another necessary extravagance was gloves. A fashion writer of the period remarks:

> Short sleeves to dressy gowns are quite universal, and the consequential long gloves for outdoor wear are absolutely ruinous to a modest purse, so it is permissible to have tight-fitting mitten-like cuffs of white net or lace, or a lace dyed the colour of the gown, which said cuffs are not worn indoors, but are provided with an elastic hemmed in round the top so as to be slipped on when going out. If this plan be not adopted the gloves must actually reach the elbow, and however the spirit of economy may devise makeshifts, long gloves are needful to produce a properly dressed appearance. Coloured gloves are worn again, fortunately, and this is a less extravagant habit than white elbow-length ones.

In the evening, of course, long white gloves reaching to above the elbow were absolutely *de rigueur*.

It is, however, not the evening dress, but the *grande toilette* for day wear which is most characteristic of the period, a period which provided unusual opportunities for the display of such creations, opportunities of which modern Ascot is the last miserable remnant. The social activities of the age may be said to have revolved round the two poles mentioned in the heading of our chapter, the garden party and the casino.

No doubt there had been garden parties since the middle of the century, and casinos, in the sense of places where gambling could be carried on, for a much longer period, but circumstances now combined to give both a social significance they had hardly enjoyed before. The casino in particular was so important that it almost deserves a chapter to itself. Never before had the English upper classes been so conscious of the disagreeable aspects of the English winter; never had so many of them fled overseas to the

warmer climate of the French Riviera, and, in particular, to Monaco. Monte Carlo became the Mecca of European Society and of the rich Americans who could afford to join in its gaiety. Luxurious expresses were run from all the capitals of Europe. An especially luxurious one was the St Petersburg-Vienna-Cannes express, which had card- and writing-saloons in addition to the dining-car, and on which the *cuisine* was equal to that of a first-class restaurant. It was usual to dress for dinner, and so wealthy and extravagant were the majority of the passengers brought from Russia to the Riviera that it became the dream of every *demi-mondaine* to be kept by a Grand Duke.

The gaming-rooms at Monte Carlo were crowded all day, and attained a particular animation in the evening. They became a social promenade even for those who did not intend to gamble seriously. The most extraordinary mixture of clothes was seen in them, everything but knickerbockers being admitted, the ladies wearing smart day dresses or evening dresses, with the addition of immense plumed hats.

The upper classes of Europe had succeeded in establishing for themselves a perpetual summer, and this fact was reflected in women's dress. There was a tendency to lightness of colour: the old dark shades, which might have been worn both with propriety and economy in a London fog, were obviously out of place either at garden parties or in casinos. There was a use of flimsy and perishable material, easily spoiled by the rain, and therefore all the more expensive. There was a general fluffiness in the whole of the feminine *toilette*, but it was a fluffiness built upon the Olympian figure confined in extremely tight corsets. Dresses were long and trailing and, like the shoes of the shopkeeper in the story, "quite unsuitable for pedestrians." They were seen to greatest advantage in an open victoria, for the day of the carriage had not yet passed. Every really fashionable woman prided herself on having an automobile as well; but she would never have agreed that such a machine was ever likely to sweep away her elegant carriage and pair. Motoring had very little influence on the ordinary forms of dress. Indeed, it was still regarded as a kind of specialized sport, with its own appropriate costume, this costume consisting of a flat

cap, tied on the head with a thick veil, and a long coat to keep out the dust.

The essential lines of female costume remained the same from the beginning of the century until 1908, and in some particulars even until 1910. Those lines are easy enough to determine, but the characteristic of the period lay in the shape of the corset, which, while introducing a vertical line in the front of the body, had the effect of throwing the bust forward and pushing the hips back, giving every woman an S-shaped, swan-like appearance. This was reinforced by the extremely long skirts trailing upon the ground behind, at first for a considerable distance, but growing shorter as the period progressed. Even day dresses had these long trailing skirts, although from time to time attempts were made to introduce a skirt which just cleared the ground and kept its essential arum-lily shape by means of kilting. The skirt had to be very much wider round the hem than anywhere else. It rose fairly smoothly over the hips and terminated in an extremely narrow waistline.

The effect of this extremely narrow waist was, however, somewhat marred by the other characteristic of the period—the falling Russian blouse. It was considered essential to have a kind of pouch of material hanging over the waist in front, reaching perhaps its extreme of exaggeration in the years 1902 and 1903. The general effect was as if the female body had been cut in two at the waist, and the pieces put together again after the upper portion had been pushed several inches forward, so that the whole looked like a ship's figurehead, curved to fit the prow of the vessel. The form of the corset made it almost essential to throw the head back in order to balance the carriage of the body, the bust being thrust upward and forward. The wax dummy figures in old-fashioned hairdressers' shops still show the essential lines of the figure at this period. It had the advantage, from a mature woman's point of view, of allowing the bust to be very big, without detracting from the impression of elegance, the loose blouse being extremely roomy—to such an extent, indeed, that to the modern eye the silhouette of 1903, for example, has an appearance of monstrosity.

Evening dresses were often quite low in front, but day dresses,

even of the most ceremonial kind, concealed everything of the body except the face and hands, and even the latter were often hidden by means of gloves. The neck was entirely encased in a jabot or collar of lace reaching almost to the tips of the ears, and often kept in position by little celluloid or whalebone supports. This high collar lasted until 1913, when its timid abandonment caused diatribes to be issued from the pulpit against the danger both to morals and health of what was called the V-neck. If moralists had had a little longer memory they would have realized that the high neck which they considered essential to female modesty was, in fact, quite a recent invention, and that the prudish Victorians themselves had been far more décolleté, even in the daytime. But the professional moralist's power of historical perspective is notoriously deficient, and also his sense of what is important and what is unimportant, for it is undeniable that the period we have been discussing, when hardly any of the female body was exposed at all, was anything but an essentially moral age.

It is curious that the collars of men during this period were built on the same lines as those of women. They consisted of perpendicular cylinders of stiff linen, either double or single, encircling the neck completely. Women, for their tailor-made and country clothes, adopted these high stiff masculine collars, which were, indeed, but the formalization of the high lace collars of their more formal gowns. The human neck was almost completely hidden from view for a whole decade.

In the year 1908 the essential lines of the costume we have been discussing began to be slightly modified. The bust was no longer thrust so far forward as before: the exaggerated overlap of the blouse in front was abandoned, and skirts became a little narrower at the hem, although they still trailed on the ground for a considerable distance, and required to be gathered up in the hand when crossing a wet or muddy street. The change was due, in part, to the coming of what was called "the Empire gown," although it had very little real connexion with the high-waisted dress of a century before. None the less its influence was successful in straightening the female figure, which by 1910 was almost completely upright. Hats, which had been very elaborate throughout

the period, became in the same year extremely wide, and were to grow wider yet in the years ahead. Hats, however, will be dealt with in a separate chapter. It is sufficient to note here than an extremely wide hat always seems to have the effect of narrowing the width of the bottom of the skirt, as if there were some natural law which forbade the feminine figure to be wide at both ends at once. The social and artistic influences which led to this revolution must be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter VIII

PAUL POIRET AND THE RUSSIAN BALLET

A FUNDAMENTAL change took place in feminine dress in the year 1910 comparable only with that fundamental change which transformed the woman of the eighteenth century into the woman of the Directoire period, and far greater in importance than any change which has taken place since; for even the adoption of short skirts was of less ultimate significance. Since the beginning of the century the principal forms of dress for women had remained the same, being all founded, whatever their superficial differences, upon the straight-fronted corset which at once imprisoned the breasts and threw them forward, pushed back the hips and narrowly confined the waist. But in 1910 all this was swept away. Women resumed their upright position instead of the S-shape which had been theirs for a decade. The top of the corset was lower, leaving the bosom free: the waist was not so tight. On the other hand, wide skirts were abandoned and narrow ones introduced—skirts so narrow that they shackled the legs, and in their extreme form made it difficult for women to walk properly. The ultimate result was the hobble-skirt of 1911, but the immediate creations of the new fashion showed much plainer evidence of their origin. They had all a curious Oriental look, as if the women of Western civilization had suddenly decided to adopt the costume of the harem. This was in fact what had actually happened. The change in fashion was due to the overwhelming wave of Orientalism which swept over Parisian society, and that Orientalism was due to two forces working independently but often closely allied. The names of these two forces were Paul Poiret and the Russian Ballet.

The exact share of each in bringing in the new Orientalism will probably always be a matter of dispute. Paul Poiret deals with the matter very frankly in his reminiscences.[1] Naturally enough,

[1] *My First Fifty Years*, by Paul Poiret, translated by Stephen Haden Guest (London, 1931).

he claims to have been the innovator, and is at pains to demonstrate that his reputation was already made before that of Bakst, common as it is to consider all Poiret's characteristic gowns as being ultimately inspired by the designer of *Schéhérazade*. Certainly Poiret always refused to execute dresses from Bakst's designs, and this was not jealousy on his part, but a very proper pride in his own creations.

Poiret appears to have been an Orientalist from the very beginning, even when, as the humble assistant of an umbrella-maker, he purloined pieces of silk in order to dress a doll, now as a piquant Parisienne, now as an Eastern queen. He was not long in finding his way into that world of dressmaking which was then presided over by the great houses of Doucet, Worth, Rouff, Paquin, and Redfern; and it was the first of these, the Maison Doucet, which in 1896 gave him his chance. Five years later he entered the Maison Worth. In no long time, rebelling against the formalism of the Worth tradition, he set up for himself, and soon after designed the so-called Confucius cloak, which was the beginning of the Oriental influence in fashion, of which he had made himself the apostle. He waged war against the corset, and succeeded in introducing into its form the profound modifications mentioned above.

It may well be asked how one designer, however talented, could have so profound an influence on his epoch; but Poiret was no ordinary *couturier*. He had a natural genius for publicity, not so much from any calculating desire to make his wares better known, as from his own innate love of magnificence and the pleasure he found in presenting his dresses in a luxurious setting and with every refinement of art. At the beginning of the century a new era of *réclame* had dawned in the world of fashion. The magazine *Femina*, founded by Pierre Lafitte after the Exhibition of 1900, was the forerunner of a number of luxurious journals which combined instruction in the latest whims of fashion with a great deal of social publicity, of a kind which had hitherto been quite unknown. The fashionable world found itself photographed whenever it appeared at any of its functions, and these photographs, reproduced in a journal like *Femina*, were eagerly scanned by those less fortunate

who wished to think themselves in the movement, and even by those who desired nothing more than the illusion of vicarious luxury.

Among the members of the elegant world themselves the advent of the illustrated social newspaper introduced a new element. It made them self-conscious and keener in competition, and it vastly extended the number of those social engagements which had a publicity value. It provided, as it were, a shop-window for fine feathers. It would be interesting to speculate how far the new enthusiasm for sport was stimulated by the fact that owing to the ubiquitous camera of the Society reporter *le monde* could parade itself before the world even when it was at play. No longer was it necessary to drive in the Bois de Boulogne in order to be seen and admired. The faithful cameraman followed on to the tennis court, on to the golf links, to Monte Carlo in the spring, to Deauville in the summer, and to Biarritz in the autumn. The new publicity benefited also the *couturier*, for it was no longer so necessary for a fine lady to be seen wearing a gown by Poiret: she could be shown attending Poiret's private view of new fashions.

The mannequin parades of the fashionable dressmakers became themselves fashionable occasions, which had certainly never happened before in the whole history of dress. People went to a fashion parade as their fathers had gone to a play or to a private view of pictures. They expected a luxurious *décor*, soft lights, music, a procession of beautiful mannequins, and, what is even more important, they expected something startlingly new and original in the clothes presented before their eyes.

To the man of the right temperament such circumstances provided an additional inspiration and incentive, and Poiret was not the man to fail to make use of them. He set the fashion of removing his business from the ordinary streets favoured by the dressmakers and showing his creations in a luxurious private house. His rivals prophesied his ruin, but the fashionable public, avid of novelty, flocked to his door. He employed the best artists of his day to decorate his salons; he chose his mannequins with infinite care. He was careful to admit only those whose presence might lend *cachet* to his exhibitions, and in addition to all this his clothes had an

originality which began by shocking but ended by conquering the town. His house became the temple of a new religion, or rather of a very old religion which had now found its appropriate shrine, and of which he had constituted himself the high priest.

Folios of his dresses were issued, luxuriously mounted and illustrated by artists of the calibre of Paul Iribe and Georges Lepape. Not content with designing clothes for the fashionable world, he turned his attention to the stage, and was one of the first to insist that there should be close collaboration between the dress-designer and the scenic artist. His method was to agree with the decorators upon an absolute colour-scheme. The first act was to be blue and green, the second red and violet, the third black and white, and so on—a system which was carried out with complete success in Poiret's first theatrical production, *Minaret*.

It is interesting to note the obvious Orientalism implied by the very name of this piece, but Oriental plays had been mounted before without any very profound influence on fashion. Poiret carried his enthusiasms into private society by the organizing of fêtes, each mounted with consummate skill and utterly regardless of cost. The most famous of these entertainments, the fête of "the Thousand and Second Night," took place in 1911. Those who did not arrive in Persian costume were offered the alternative of going away again or changing into a costume provided by their host. When they entered they found that the whole house had been transformed, with a sanded court, blue and gold tents, fountains in little porcelain basins, negro slaves, harem ladies, monkeys, parrots, and ibises. In the dark bar only the liquors were luminous. Three hundred guests were entertained till dawn by every kind of distraction.

It was a new kind of entertainment, and was not likely to go long uncopied. In the following year a magnificent "Thousand-and-one-night" ball was given by the Comtesse de Chabrillas, exceeding in splendour anything that had ever been seen. The same fête was repeated a few days later by the Comtesse Blanche de Clermont-Tonnerre. *Tout Paris* was at either one or the other—perhaps at both. The fame of these two entertainments spread abroad, and the English illustrated papers showed pictures of the

haut monde in Oriental dress. The Marquise d'Argenson was shown in a "real harem skirt," the Vicomtesse de Coulombières and Prince Henri de Polignac "as in a tale by Schéhérazade."

The name Schéhérazade must remind us that this passion for the Orient was not entirely Poiret's doing, whatever his precise share in it may have been, for the year of the fête we have been describing was 1912, and the Russian Ballet had already taken Paris by storm. The success of the Russian Ballet was one of the most startling phenomena of the five years which preceded the War. There had been much ballet in France, no doubt, throughout the nineteenth century, and no lack of *balletomanes*. The genius of Degas has preserved for all time the groups of dancers in practice rooms, on stage, or in the corridors of the Paris Opéra, clothed all alike in their uniform *tutu* to which the genius of Taglioni and the immense success of *La Sylphide* in the early thirties had condemned them. But the Russian Ballet was felt by every one to be something new, something revolutionary, something capable of influencing and even of transforming public taste.

The revival of the ballet, the discovery of it as something fresh, something able to have a profound influence on taste, was part of the Parisian's general enthusiasm for music, which in its full development dates back no farther than the early years of the twentieth century. This passion for music in Paris was due largely to two men, the millionaire financier Count Isaac de Camondo and the impresario Gabriel Astruc. The alliance of these two men made first-class music fashionable, both at private houses and at public concerts. In one of its aspects, no doubt, this development is part of the general emergence of the rich Jew as director of taste in France in the years preceding the War. But it was not in concerts that the influence of Astruc was most remarkable. He had made the acquaintance of a Russian named Diaghilev, who had just succeeded in introducing a revolutionary element into the ballet in Russia. He had broken with the classical tradition, and had substituted for it a kind of musical pantomime (as his opponents called it) in which the *décor* and the costume were almost of equal importance to the actual dancing. Diaghilev's ballet, wrongly called "the Russian Ballet," arrived in Paris in

1909 at the Châtelet Theatre. It provoked scenes of enthusiasm such as had not been witnessed since the early days of the Romantics; the blasé Parisian public was completely carried away. There were a few dissentient voices, but the general mood was one of exclusive enthusiasm for this new revelation of the possibilities of art. As M. Jules Bertaut observes:

> Almost immediately could be perceived the influence which this debauch of violent colours was to exercise on painting, costume, interior decoration. Already one can note all that French choreography and *mise en scène* was to learn from this young, fresh, ardent, unexpected art, which opened before us such unsuspected perspectives. Few people then suspected the extent and the force of the revolution which had been provoked by Diaghilev. It is only to-day that we can measure its dynamism. Fundamentally it was yet once more the thousand-coloured Orient bursting into our grey and monotonous life and overflowing it. The *ballets russes* are a note in the history of French æsthetics.[1]

When, however, people spoke of the influence of Diaghilev they really meant the influence of Bakst, and of all Bakst's ballets the one which had most influence and appealed the most strongly to the public imagination was undoubtedly *Schéhérazade*. This astonishing piece, which was shown to Paris in 1910 and shortly afterwards in London, was a piece of Orientalism as frankly voluptuous as had ever been presented on the stage. To most of those who saw it it came like a shock of revelation. Where had such colours ever been seen before? Such mingling of orange and crimson, such riot of gold? Bakst as a painter is now forgotten. The other ballets which he decorated—*Cléopatre*, *Carnaval*, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Tamar*, and the rest—are hardly remembered; at least, his part in them has faded into oblivion. But the colours which he splashed over the harem of Schéhérazade passed first into clothes and then into interior decoration, and may still be seen inflaming the walls and embellishing the cushions of the little suburban teashops to which they have by this time filtered down. Without the enormous success of the Russian Ballet, and in particular of this one ballet *Schéhérazade*, it is doubtful whether even the Orientalism of Poiret would have had so profound an influence

[1] *L'Opinion et les Mœurs.*

on taste and fashion. No one who would write the social history of the years immediately preceding the War can afford to neglect the Russian Ballet.

Orientalism, however, would not by itself have been sufficient to explain the evolution of fashion during the five years immediately preceding the First World War. Those five years, from the end of 1909 until the autumn of 1914, form a complete period, fundamentally different in its essential line both from the years before and from the years after. Such Orientalism as we have been discussing manifested itself chiefly in a revival of strong colours, and in the draped forms of evening dresses. It was not so manifest in day wear for women, especially as during this period the tailor-made was at its apogee. The harem skirt, an obvious derivative of the Oriental impulse, was worn by a few bold women, but they were chased off the streets with almost as much obloquy as those *merveilleuses* who dared to appear in the streets of Paris in 1795 with their breasts uncovered. The harem skirt for day wear was never anything more than an eccentricity; but its counterpart, which followed the same essential outline, was the 'hobble skirt,' and this was worn by nearly everybody. The narrow skirt of 1910 was an astonishing change from the extremely flowing skirts which had prevailed for the last fifteen years. No longer was it necessary or even possible to lift the skirts when crossing the streets. The voluminous lace under-petticoat was abolished completely. The day of 'frillies' was over, and an entirely new feminine æsthetic had been born.

A fashion writer in 1910 remarks: "The hobble skirt is past—if it can indeed ever be said to have arrived so far as good fashion is concerned." But this is merely an expression of personal opinion, or perhaps hope, which is by no means borne out by the fact. The comic papers in 1911 are full of jokes about the excessively narrow skirts and the difficulty which women found in moving about in them.

With these very narrow skirts was worn an immense hat, the direct descendant of the large hats of the last decade, but even wider, and adorned with yet more plumes—a curious example of the persistence of one element of fashion into a period when all the

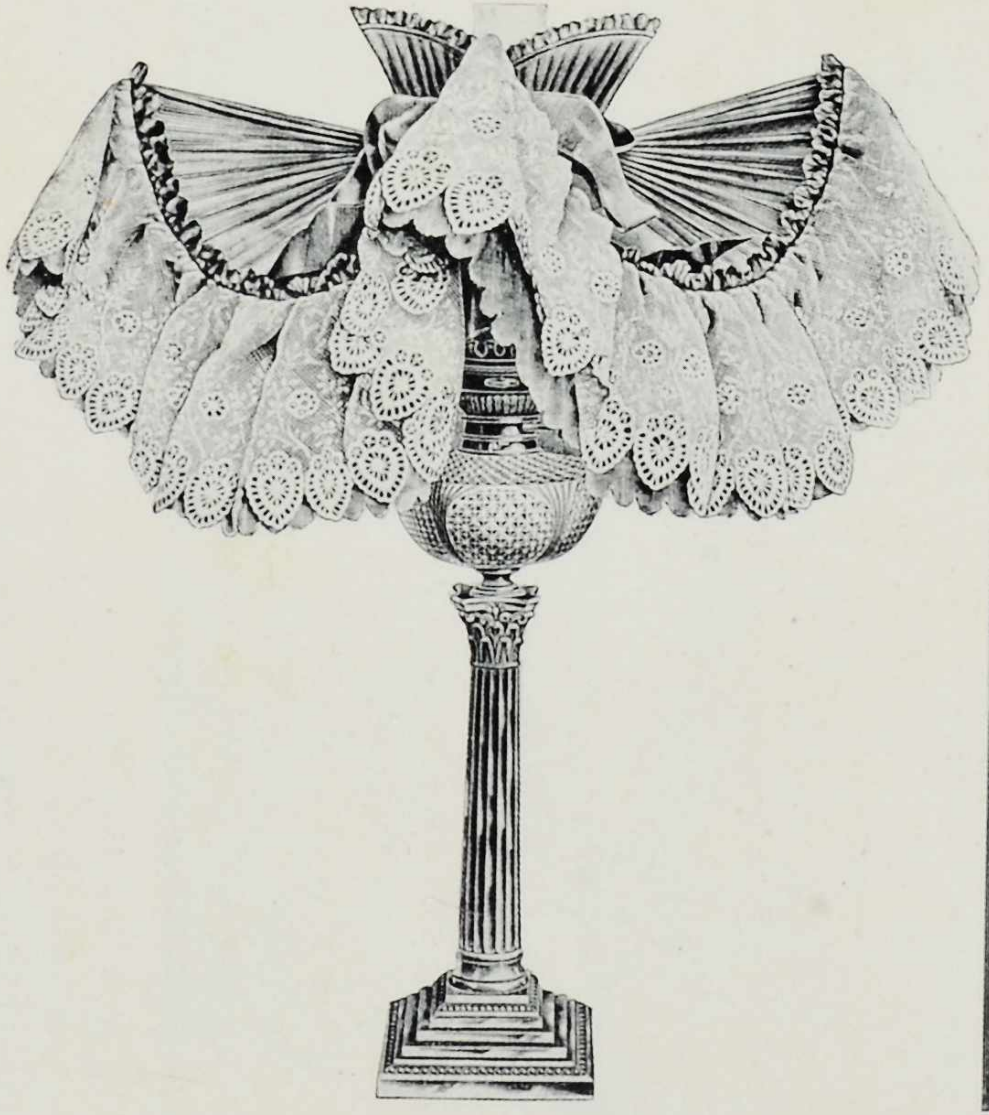
other elements were strangely reversed. With the immense hats went very large muffs, and, of course, the handbag or reticule reappeared, as it was plainly impossible for skirts so narrow to contain any pockets at all. The handbag also was immensely large, like all the accessories of this period.

The high neck still persisted in the form of a kind of lace dog-collar and yoke. Loose mantles were much worn, and scarves also. A coat-and-skirt outfit was very common, with a blouse underneath. The blouse, indeed, still held its own, although it was much plainer than during what we have called the casino and garden-party period. A commentator notes:

> Flannel and delaine blouses for travelling and for tennis, cycling, and other exercises; the silk-and-wools, cashmeres, muslins, or wool-*crêpes* for simple afternoon wear; and the *crêpe de Chines*, the embroideries, the laces, the silken fabrics for smarter occasions.

There was, however, a growing tendency for the whole dress to be made of one material, a fashion which seemed more desirable than the very practical blouse and skirt, which to the fashionable savoured too much of economy. The favourite trimming was buttons, which were worn in all shapes and sizes and in great numbers, sewn in the most unlikely places all over the costume. Strips of black velvet were also much in favour as trimming, being sometimes combined even with quite flimsy material. A combination of braid and buttons was a favourite trimming on blue serge and similar hard-wearing stuffs.

Early in 1912 the extremely narrow skirts, plain to the ankles, showed signs of change. A close, straight effect was still aimed at, but 'draperies' were coming in, especially in the evening, either in the form of an overdraping of some filmy fabric over the main dress, by a tunic, or by the catching up of some portion of the skirt here and there. It was this catching up of the skirt upon which fashion was to play its variation during the next three years. Even when it was well done the effect was rather odd; when it was badly done it produced an extremely ugly form of skirt, which seemed to owe its shape more to accident than to design. The tunics already mentioned played their part in the development of this fashion. Lace tunics were very fashionable, even with day dresses, and there



Decorative Unity of an Epoch
Lamp, 1895; fashionable lady, 1899

Evening Dress, 1813
From *La Belle Assemblée*

Dinner Dress, 1912
Designed by Paul Poiret, painted by Georges Lepape

was a passion for wearing rich materials over plainer ones. In evening dresses there was a craze for tunics of gold lace. By 1913 or the beginning of 1914 the tunic effect, with a draped skirt underneath, might be described as the fundamental mode. Towards the middle of 1914 the so-called lampshade tunic had established itself; it was always worn over a narrow and clinging underskirt. In the end the lampshade tunic became a 'dominant' —that is to say, it was the feature of the dress of 1914 upon which the attention of designers was concentrated, and which was to provide the jumping-off stage for the development of the next mode, which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

The most startling innovation in dress at the end of 1913 and the beginning of 1914 had, however, nothing to do with skirts: it was a fundamental change in the form of dresses at the neck. *Les décolletés du jour*, known in England as 'V-necks,' created an amount of public excitement which in retrospect seems ridiculous, misguided, or both. A campaign of astonishing ferocity was waged against the abandonment of the high-necked blouse or bodice, which had lasted for so long. Many of the clergy denounced the new low necks as indecent. Doctors were not lacking who prophesied that this unwonted exposure of the throat would condemn a whole generation of women to chills and every kind of disease of the chest. One would have thought, to read these diatribes, that women had never exposed their throats before. By some curious aberration there was no attack upon *les décolletés du soir*, which one would have thought to be infinitely more dangerous both to the health of woman and to the morals of man.

In reality, from the health point of view there was nothing to be said for the high necks of the preceding age. They were composed, for the most part, of lace or other flimsy material, which could have provided very little protection against the cold winds, but which, being kept in position by stiff bones, must have restricted the female neck almost as much as the male neck was restricted by the high collar. As a matter of fact the V-necks of 1914 were extremely modest. Although the collar disappeared altogether in some models, in others it had merely retreated to the back to form the so-called Medici collar. In any case the indignation of the unco'

guid had, as usual, no effect whatever. Open necks became universal. A commmentator of the period recalls with astonishment: "Even serious materials, as one may call blue serge, submit to this cut-open front rule." The triumph of the open throat was complete, and the victory which had been gained by the women of 1914 was not likely to be allowed to slip by the liberty-loving years of the War or the pleasure-loving decade which followed. Even the reaction towards more formal modes which we have witnessed in the nineteen-thirties has so far had no influence on the form of the neck-line, and women show no intention of returning to the high bodices of what now seems a very remote age indeed.

Chapter IX

WAR AND POST-WAR

A GREAT war nearly always has a profound effect on feminine costume, and the European War of 1914–18 was no exception. When hostilities broke out in August 1914 women's dress was still following the lines of development discussed in the last chapter. For a short while it showed no change, and there was no such striking and sudden abandonment of an old costume as that which characterized the early years of the French Revolution and the Directoire. Change, when it did come, came gradually, by one of those curious transitions which fashion-designers always make use of when they can. The transitional form can be observed in the early months of 1915. Skirts remained long and rather narrow but over them was worn a kind of flared-out tunic down to about the knees, inspired no doubt by the officers' tunics, which, with their comparatively long skirts and ample pockets, presented a very similar silhouette. The materials were plainer than they had been, for already in 1915 people were beginning to talk of the necessity for economy. Jokes appeared in the illustrated papers of the rarity value of old clothes, and to appear in anything strikingly new began to be considered as an unpatriotic gesture.

The long narrow skirt underneath the tunic was, however, soon found to be an encumbrance. The constant departure of men for the new army left vacant many situations in civil life, and women began to be recruited as chauffeurs, bus conductors, lift attendants, and land workers. Such feminine activities could not but result in a shortening of the skirt, and this was accomplished, as if by a happy inspiration, by the simple expedient of abolishing the under-skirt altogether and slightly lengthening the tunic, so that by the middle of 1915 feminine dress had assumed the essential form which it was to keep throughout the whole of the War period.

From a normal waist the skirt flared outward sharply, just as its predecessor the tunic had done, only now this former over-skirt

was the only garment and stretched downward to just below the calf. Its general appearance was very much like that of a modern, slightly longer skating dress, and it was extremely convenient for the more active life which women were now leading.

Evening frocks, and in particular dance dresses, showed the same tendency. The décolletage was almost horizontal, and the bodice was held in place by simple shoulder-straps. The whole effect of the upper part of the dress was rather soft and fluffy. Below the skirts flared out, kept in position by the requisite number of petticoats. With short skirts in the day-time were worn little boots, reaching almost to the bottom of the skirt, rather high-heeled and laced up the front, rather like the skating boots of to-day. These shortish skirts and high-laced boots lasted with little modification until the end of 1918. It was an essentially practical, somewhat military dress, eminently suited to the times through which women, as well as men, had been passing. But with the end of the conflict there came a change.

There can be no doubt in retrospect that this change corresponded to something profoundly significant in human history. So long as a great upheaval is in progress the variations which it introduces are hidden from the eyes of those who are undergoing it. Just as it was not until after the death of Robespierre that the changes in the social structure which the French Revolution had introduced became reflected in women's clothes, so it was not until after the conclusion of the War that the very profound changes which the conflict had brought into being became apparent.

The emancipation of women had been proceeding for a long time, but proceeding so slowly that its effect on feminine dress was almost negligible. The War immensely stimulated this process; but so long as the War lasted the new duties which women had adopted prevented them from realizing how very emancipated they had become. "Now," said the women of 1794, "we can begin to enjoy ourselves." "Now," said the girls of 1919, "we can begin to enjoy ourselves." For the fundamental fact about the Great War was this, that it gave liberty not to the older married woman, but to the young girl just scarcely out of her teens. In all classes of society she had tasted economic freedom, which is the only freedom

that matters. She had money to spend, and this was a more valuable equality than anything that could be obtained by the clamour for women's rights. For probably the first time in history the flapper was free, and it was she who was to dictate the fashion for the next decade. If anyone doubts this let him consider the extremely juvenile form which women's dress suddenly adopted in the nineteen-twenties, culminating in the little girl's dress of 1926. But we must not anticipate. By 1921 the extreme fullness of the skirt of the War period had disappeared, and waists had disappeared with it. Corsets, in anything like the old sense of the word, had gone, and any man who was young in the early nineteen-twenties will probably remember that it was about this period when, placing his hand round the waist of his dancing partner, he noticed the absence of that rigid bone shell which used to confine the feminine figure.

It is a curious fact in human history, and one well worthy of more attention than it has received from the social psychologists, that the disappearance of corsets is always accompanied by two related phenomena—promiscuity and an inflated currency. No corsets, bad money, and general moral laxity; corsets, sound money, and the prestige of the *grande cocotte*—such seems to be the rule. In any case, the period immediately following the Great War showed a marked resemblance to the Directoire period, when also women flung their corsets into the dustbin and their bonnets over the windmills.

The disappearance of corsets is connected with another phenomenon characteristic of all periods following a great upheaval. The first thing (not necessarily the second or the third thing) which the emancipated woman does is to try to look as much like a man as possible. She therefore tends to cut her hair short and to abandon any pretence of having a waist. These tendencies, however, took some years to make themselves felt. Indeed, in 1923, we notice a curious tendency to make the hips as wide as possible, and that not for the reason which made women try to make their hips look wide in 1880—a desire to have a small waist—but apparently out of sheer perversity. To the modern eye, accustomed as it is to extremely narrow hips, there is something

monstrous about the fashions of 1923. Wads of stuff or pads of fur were fixed to the hips. Some frocks even had little panniers, although there was no waist above the panniers, but simply a tubular bodice, descending from the shoulders without any diminution in size. The panniers were soon abandoned in favour of a straight dress, which at first was slightly wider at the hips than elsewhere. A year later it became completely tubular. Dress-making has perhaps never been so simple. A wide shawl wound round the body under the armpits and kept in place by two narrow shoulder-straps—such was all that was required for the construction of a fashionable evening dress. Day dresses followed the same line. Both day and evening dresses were for a time slightly longer than they had been during the War period.

Once the pretence of having a waist had been abandoned there was no reason why the waist of the dress should retain its normal position. Instead of rising as it had done in the Directoire period, it showed a tendency to sink. Already in 1923 it was round the hips, and it remained there until the end of the decade. Such a thing had never happened before. The low waist of the twenties is one of the curiosities in the history of fashion.

The line was emphasized, and perhaps partly stabilized, by the popularity of the 'jumper,' which now made its appearance. It had already been worn for sports clothes and by the ladies in Augustus John's pictures for some years. About 1922 it seemed suddenly to become the wear of almost every woman. Underneath the jumper was a blouse, and this blouse followed the same line. Instead of allowing its fullness to bulge out over the waist, like the blouse of the early years of the century, women pulled it down over the hips. It became, in fact, a kind of jumper itself.

The tubular impression was emphasized by the abolition of that long-prized feminine attribute the bust. The bust, if one may so express oneself, had had a long innings, and had perhaps reached its apogee about the year 1905, when the form of the corsets caused it to be thrown forward in such a manner that only the mature woman could wear the fashions of that date with advantage. The high-waisted fashions of the Directoire had been kind only to younger women. The fashions of 1923 and the following

years were kind only to women who were hardly women at all, but schoolgirls without any of the characteristics of the feminine figure.

To create this schoolgirl figure a new kind of corset came in, without bones and exerting its pressure not on the waist, as all previous corsets had done, but on the breasts, so as to flatten them and make them as little conspicuous as possible. After the holocaust of the Great War motherhood was at a discount, and the attributes of motherhood, so far from being admired, as they had been in most ages, were treated as something to be rigorously concealed. It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that this meant the temporary eclipse of the Frenchwoman, with her well-developed figure, and the dominance of the English and, still more, the American type. The angular Englishwoman, over whose lack of *embonpoint* papers like *La Vie Parisienne* had been making merry for two generations, now became the accepted type of beauty, and those who did not conform to the type by nature had to do their best to do so by artifice and slimming. Women exercised desperately, ate as little as possible, and suffered tortures at the hands of *masseurs* in an endeavour to attain and preserve the new line. The ladies in fashion-plate designers' drawings grew thinner and thinner, till they were, in proportion with the rest of the body, almost twice the natural height of any living woman. The Rubensesque ideal was gone: even Botticelli was discredited: El Greco reigned supreme.

Some day a social history of the nineteen-twenties will be written: it will be a strange story, comparable in many ways with the story of the Directoire, but even more abandoned, more cynical, more extravagant. There was a craze for dancing similar to that which always takes place after great disasters. There was such a craze, as we have seen, after the Black Death, and also after the French Revolution. One madness seemed to seize all classes: dance-halls and night clubs sprang up everywhere, and the whole world, or that young part of it which now more than ever set the tone, shuffled round exiguous floors locked in a close embrace to the blaring of a negro band. Even in Paris, where the Tzigane orchestra had reigned for forty years, real or pseudo gipsies were driven out by the real or imitation negroes. The saxophone was

the new magic pipe whose strains set everybody dancing. The night club established itself everywhere, not only in England, where the licensing restrictions provided some excuse, but in Paris and Berlin. Formal dances were discontinued, largely owing to the new poverty of those who had formerly given them, and with formal dances disappeared the chaperon and all that surveillance of the young which had been considered a duty of parents from time immemorial.

London was first entertained and then scandalized by the doings of a body of people known as the Bright Young Things. Their activities culminated in a symbolic Baby Party, in which grown young men and women, dressed in baby costumes—which, so far as the women were concerned, were not very different from their ordinary dress—ran races in perambulators round one of London's more respectable squares. In Paris, and even more especially in Berlin, the uncertainty of the financial situation and the progressive depreciation of the currency made people anxious to spend money while it still bought something.

The old ideals of home and children seemed to have fallen into disuse, and the growing knowledge of methods of contraception enabled young people to conduct their amorous affairs without danger. It also encouraged them to enter into marriages which were hardly expected to last. The sudden multiplication of motor-cars made the problems of parental control even more difficult of solution than they had been before. The daughters of the middle classes were whisked away in two-seaters; the daughters of the lower classes on the pillions of motor-cycles. The counsels of the old were discredited. Had they not, according to popular theory, been responsible for the Great War? They had, it was thought, caused many young men to die. Why should they be listened to when they strove to teach young women how to live? As the twenties progressed the pace got faster and faster, and at the same time (dress-designers here too were moved by some profound psychological instinct) women's skirts grew shorter and shorter.

It is interesting to note than in 1924 very short skirts were sometimes made with transparent over-skirts slightly longer. The same device, it will be seen, was used in the dressmakers' deter-

mined attempt to bring back longer skirts at the end of the twenties.

Bobbed hair, as the symbol of the new emancipation, makes its appearance immediately after the War, but the 'bob' did not suit everybody. In 1924 there is talk of 'shingling,' and many a woman in this year cut away what had long been considered the crowning glory of her sex.

The same year saw the first signs of the *cloche* hat, and this was extremely important, because when it had imposed itself on the fashion it almost compelled women to wear their hair short. Those who would not cut off their locks were condemned to wear the only possible hat on the tops of their heads, where it gave a very ridiculous appearance. Within a couple of years of the first appearance of the *cloche* 99 per cent. of the young women of Western Europe had short hair. Some of them, not content with the shingle, adopted the 'Eton crop'—hair cut as short as a boy's. This was most usual about 1927, and as trousers for girls came in in this year it was often quite impossible at first glance to tell a boy from a girl. In the same year skirts became so extremely short that it was impossible for a woman to sit down without showing her knees, and often very much more. It was no unusual thing for the suspenders and bare thighs of a girl to be visible when, with the characteristic unconcern of the period, she crossed her legs in a chair. But the most important effect of short skirts lay in compelling all women to pay much more attention to, and to spend much more money on, stockings and shoes than they had ever done before. We have grown so accustomed in the last few years to seeing flesh-coloured stockings on most of the feminine legs within sight that we are apt to forget how recent such a fashion is. Black and other dark-coloured stockings, even if they were of silk and partly transparent, had been usual up to the year 1924. In that year every woman's stockings suddenly became flesh-coloured: also, they had to be of silk, or at least of artificial silk, and they had to be drawn very tightly over the legs by means of suspenders.

It would be difficult to say whether the vogue for very short skirts created the demand for silk stockings or whether it was the new method of manufacturing silk stockings at a reasonable price

which reinforced the tendency towards the short skirt. The reasonable price was perhaps largely delusive, for even imitation silk stockings were expensive enough, if one took into consideration the very small amount of wear which could be got out of them. Perhaps never before had so much money been spent on women's leg-coverings, and a whole new erotic-æsthetic arose, based upon the newly discovered seductiveness of the feminine leg. It had the effect of reinforcing yet more the youthfulness of the current ideal, and of emphasizing the superior attractions of the American type; for few Englishwomen, and hardly any Frenchwomen, could compete with the neat ankles and slender calves of their sisters on the other side of the Atlantic.

We have already mentioned the appearance in 1924 of the *cloche* hat. For the next five years this form exercised an absolute tyranny, and became as much a uniform as the poke bonnet had been in the forties and fifties. Indeed, the uniformity of all women's dress at this period is most remarkable. It consisted of a *cloche* hat, a simple, straight-lined dress with very short skirts and an extremely low waist, long silk stockings, and low shoes. Such a scheme provided singularly little scope for variety or invention, and its limitations were particularly noticeable in evening dress or dress for formal occasions. It even led to some obvious absurdities: a bride might have a veil as a train, but her skirt in front revealed her knees. Court dress, with its feathers in the hair and its extremely short skirts, resembled more the ceremonial costume of the Hottentots than anything which had previously been seen in the presence of European royalty. It was partly these absurdities which ultimately led to the abandonment of the fashion.

There were not lacking those who hailed the apparent stereotyping of feminine dress in 1926–27 as the triumph of common sense. Woman for the first time, we were told, had cast away her clinging draperies and adopted a sheerly rational costume, useful alike for boarding buses and for dealing with break and accelerator. The dominant theory of functionalism was called in to explain the dress of women, the fact being ignored that an essential part of the costume of this period, the long silk stocking, was extremely unpractical. Light-coloured stockings frequently deve-

loped 'ladders,' and in wet weather soon became splashed and dirty. It was this latter consideration which led in the autumn of 1924 to the introduction of the so-called Russian boot.

This boot—which might with almost equal propriety have been called the German boot—was a development from the gum-boot which had been found so useful during the War. During the winter of 1924–25 the use of such boots was almost universal. They ascended usually to the top of the calf, with the odd result that, as skirts reached down no lower than the knee, a gap of three or four inches of silk stocking was always visible. In retrospect such a gap has a very odd appearance, and was perhaps one of the reasons why the Russian boot did not last very long. The other reason was a very simple one. Feminine fashions tend to filter from above to below: they very rarely show a contrary movement. But the Russian boot was useful chiefly for those who were compelled by lack of means to be pedestrians. The force of snobbery, which is a very potent force in all matters of dress, worked against the Russian boot, and very soon it was only seen on the legs of the poorer typist and city worker.

Meanwhile, although the makers of silk stockings were enjoying a boom, manufacturers of dress materials complained that so little stuff was used in the ordinary dress that their sales were seriously affected. Dressmakers also saw their business menaced, for the extreme simplicity of the prevailing mode made it easy for women to make their own clothes. From the end of 1927 onward one is conscious of a definite effort on the part of these interests to change the fashion. But the changing of fashion is by no means as easy a process as it appears, especially when women's day dress seems to have set hard into a permanent pattern. Even in evening dresses it was seen that change would have to be introduced very gradually, if it were to be accepted at all.

Various expedients were tried. The so-called Ascot dress seemed a promising field for experiment, and dresses designed for this famous race meeting suddenly acquired long, trailing skirts of flimsy flowered material. It so happened that Ascot that year was particularly wet, and those who had adopted the new long dresses received a sharp lesson. In any case the Ascot dress is something

of an anomaly nowadays, being the only survivor into the modern world of the garden-party dress of a former age. It has become almost a fancy-dress costume, and has very little influence on contemporary fashion.

The designers next turned their attention to evening fashions. Skirts that remained short were provided at one side, or both, with pendent pieces of material two or three inches longer than the rest of the dress. Once these had been accepted the next step was to make dresses longer at the back than they were in the front, and this ugly and preposterous fashion lasted for nearly a year. In the evening or on ceremonial occasions women went about with tails, and even their underclothes echoed this mode, as can be seen very plainly in the plate opposite p. 140.

We have already mentioned the transparent gauze over-skirt which played its part in the bringing in of extremely short skirts. It was now used for a diametrically opposite purpose. Over the short skirt of opaque material was placed a long gauze skirt reaching almost to the ground, and this device succeeded in getting itself adopted in a large number of designs for evening dresses. It was then a simple step to thicken the gauze, or to make it opaque by trimming, in order to bring women back at last to skirts which reached to the ground. The victory so far as evening dresses were concerned was won, and for a year or so there was a sharp divorce between day and evening clothes, the former remaining almost as short as they had been before.

The whole story is a striking example of the ingenuity which must sometimes be used in order to induce women to adopt a new fashion, but the cunning of the dressmakers would have been exerted in vain but for the fact that everybody was growing heartily sick of the extremely short skirts which had been the mode for the last three or four years. The sight of so many feminine legs, some ugly, some tolerable, and some beautiful, had become at last a bore—in accordance with one of the fundamental rules of fashion change, that when any point of the female body has reached, as it were, the saturation-point of interest it tends to disappear in favour of some other portion. But this obscure question of the psychology of fashion will be discussed more fully in the

penultimate chapter. It is sufficient here to note that by the early thirties evening dresses reached to the ground, and even day dresses had descended from the knee to just below the calf, and to realize that, whether by mere coincidence or not, this lengthening of women's skirts corresponded to a new sense of social responsibility. All over Western Europe, as well as in America, it was realized that the party was over, that the optimism of the post-War epoch had been misplaced, that the excesses of the nineteen-twenties were leading straight to national disaster of the first magnitude. There were signs of the first beginnings of a new Puritan reaction, which might have developed into something comparable with the Victorianism of the middle of the last century if there had been no new war.

As if to emphasize this subconscious sentiment there was a new interest in the Victorians—not the purely hostile interest of the twenties, but a sympathetic interest. The great figures of the Victorian epoch ceased to be detestable and ridiculous, and began to seem quaint. It is the inevitable milestone in the process of historical reconstruction. Victorian furniture and knick-knacks began to be collected and admired, and the early nineteen-thirties paid the eighteen-nineties the compliment of readopting their puffed sleeves. The low waist was abandoned, and blouses and jumpers, instead of being extremely long, now became extremely short, as short as a page-boy's coat or an Eton jacket.

The abandonment of the *cloche* hat and the orgy of millinery which followed is more fully discussed in the chapter on *coiffures* and hats. Here it is sufficient to note that once the *cloche* had gone women were free to grow their hair again, if only to a very limited extent. If we should photograph a woman's dress of the early nineteen-thirties down to the waist and set beside it a similar photograph of a woman of the early eighteen-nineties we should find a close similarity, except that the waist is not so small in the later period. The rest of the dress, however, was very different, and it is this very difference which may lead us to doubt the easy theory of an early revival of Victorianism. The usual reason for width of sleeve is to make the waist look small, and in previous ages, as in 1830 and in 1895, it has always been accompanied by

corresponding width of skirt, to reinforce the same impression. The width of sleeves in the early nineteen-thirties had a quite different object. It was to make not the waist but the hips look small, and the prevalence of small hips in this period is sufficient to show that women had not reaccepted their old enthusiasm for the task of child-bearing. Nothing could be less motherly than the modes of the nineteen-thirties. Everywhere was seen the same mannish Greta Garbo figure, and it is an interesting question how far the popularity of the Scandinavian star was responsible for the fashion and how far her own prestige was dependent on the underlying feminine psychology of the age. In almost any previous epoch La Garbo would not have been considered a beautiful woman. With her wide mouth, her flat chest, her square shoulders, her narrow hips, her long legs, and her big feet, she is the very antithesis of what the Victorians and the Edwardians called 'a fine woman,' and that we most of us admire her is evidence of how far we have departed from that ideal. Never perhaps before in the whole history of dress has it been considered a beauty in a woman to have shoulders wider than her hips. Yet such was now the case. The hips, indeed, had become the new erogenous zone, and this is such a curious fact that it deserves a paragraph to itself.

No one, I think, has sufficiently emphasized the fact that the modes of the early nineteen-thirties were nearly all devised to be seen from behind (see plate opposite p. 160). In a dance frock this has, of course, some justification. On the modern dance-floor the woman is clasped so tightly to the bosom of her partner that all the spectators are likely to see is the back of her dress. The concentration on the backs of dresses led to the strange result of bodices cut comparatively high in front and non-existent at the back. For perhaps the first time in history women appeared in public stripped to the waist—at the back. The breasts, according to modern convention, had to be covered, and this was accomplished when the bodice was reduced to a triangle of cloth, kept in position by some kind of attachmen round the neck. But this, of course, could only affect evening dresses and bathing costumes; except that even in afternoon dresses it became for a time the fashion to slit up the back of the dress, so that it looked like a dress buttoning

at the back, of which only the top button had been fastened—a new interpretation of the old joke about the things we have left undone which we ought to have done. For ordinary day dresses even slits in the back of the bodice were obviously impracticable, and attention was therefore concentrated upon the hips. The posterior became the new erogenous zone. It had to be as small as possible, and the material of which the dress was composed had to be drawn over it with excessive tightness. We are back again at the modes of 1880, with the curious difference that they are now back to front.

It is extremely difficult to draw any conclusions from fashions so recent. Sufficient time has not yet elapsed for a correct historical perspective. Certain considerations, however, may be suggested. The first is that so long as fashion decrees that hips shall be narrow there will be no tight lacing, in spite of the fact that the waist has now returned to its normal position; for to lace in the waist tightly is to increase the apparent size of the hips, and that is just what fashion desires to avoid. It may also be suggested that so long as this mode persists there will be no large families, although the present writer is far from suggesting that fashion is ever the cause of some pronounced social phenomenon; he is convinced that it is often the reflection of the psychological state underlying the social fact, and it is that which justifies the serious study of dress. Another interesting fact is that the fashions of the nineteen-thirties no longer favoured the flapper type, but the older woman, on condition, of course, that she had kept her figure, and had remained, in short, what in former ages would have been known as the 'old maid' type, without, of course, the dowdiness which was supposed to go with it.

That dress became more elaborate after 1930 is undoubtedly true. The very effort to make the hips look smaller resulted in the building of dresses on the cross, and this was almost impossible for the amateur to accomplish. There was more distinction, therefore, between those who could afford the work of expensive *couturiers* and those who had to buy imitations in the cheaper shops than there was during the nineteen-twenties, when all women looked very much alike. The old straight-line simplicity was gone.

In times of extreme liberty dress is nearly always very simple. When the state is highly organized dresses usually tend to become more elaborate. It is perhaps too daring an excursion into the realms of political philosophy to suggest that the modes of the nineteen-thirties reflected the growing dominance of totalitarian states; yet there have been other parallels between what people wear and the Government under which they live.

There is always, indeed, some intimate, if subconscious, connexion between the two which, although it may not be apparent to contemporaries, will be plain enough when a reasonable number of years has elapsed.

Toilettes de Visite, Paris, 1911

Two Coats, 1916

Essential Lines: 1924, 1928, 1936

Chapter X

HAIR AND HATS

THE importance of these two related subjects will hardly be contested by anyone who has given any study to the history of costume during the last hundred and fifty years. They are in some ways separate subjects, but it is more convenient to consider them together, because the form of *coiffure* often influences the hat which is placed on top of it. Occasionally the reverse is true, as, for example, when the *cloche* hat in the late nineteen-twenties imposed the form of *coiffure* and compelled almost every woman to cut her hair off.

The relation between hats and *coiffures* and dresses is mysterious and often confusing. *Coiffures* and hats show an extraordinary variation even when dresses remain constant, as, for example, between 1760 and 1775, when, although the dresses are very much the same, the headdress changes from a small, closely fitting shape to the largest and most elaborate structure that has ever been seen on the feminine crown. Hats and hair, in other words, are very much more susceptible to the influences of the day even than dress, and find it more difficult to escape from them. How often have we seen in theatrical costumes that the dress has been correct in every detail, so far as the archæological knowledge of the period permitted, but that the *coiffure* has resisted all attempts to bring it into line. It is often possible to date an historical costume, or one which attempts to be historical for purposes of stage representation or fancy-dress ball, solely by means of the headdress, for when a woman wears a dress even on the stage her first consideration is that she shall look attractive, and to look attractive she must conform to the *coiffure*-æsthetic of the day. Even when stage designers have taken particular pains to ensure that the headdresses of their characters are in tune with the period, ten minutes in front of the mirror in the dressing-room is sufficient for most actresses to destroy their work and to bring the headdress into line with what

is becoming—that is to say, with the *coiffure* of the day when the play is produced. Headdresses and hairdressing, therefore, are a more valuable guide even than costume in the dating of pictures and similar exercises of historical knowledge, and their variations are sufficient to enable the expert to detect, without a shadow of doubt, the actual dates of pictures even when they are painted in the historical style of an earlier age. The Cavalier pictures, for instance, of the eighteen-forties almost invariably show the women in the headdresses of the Early Victorian period.

During the last hundred and fifty years the variation in headdressing has been enormous, and has never been without its significance. In 1800 hair was short, possibly for the first time in human history. In 1880 it was short again, representing the emergence of the New Woman with her desire to ape masculine modes. In 1925 it was once more short, representing the emancipation of the post-War flapper. Short hair when it occurs always imposes itself for some considerable period, if only for the obvious and practical reason that long hair cannot be grown again very quickly, and that while it is possible for women to go from extremely long hair to extremely short hair in one bound, the reverse process takes something like five or six years, during which period intermediate styles of hairdressing are bound to be prevalent.

We have said that there is an extraordinary variation in hairdressing and hats, even when dresses remain constant. On the other hand, there is an obvious connexion between the two, and it is one of the objects of the present chapter to trace this connexion and see if there are any rules which can be deduced from it. Is there, for instance, any parallelism which can be established between the main lines of hairdressing and the main lines of dress? It is tempting to think that it is so. The present writer has a theory that very often, if not always, the way in which the hair lies at the back of the head echoes in some mysterious fashion the way in which the dress lies over the back of the hips. It is only necessary to compare the extraordinarily elaborate *coiffures* of 1873, for example, with the elaborate bunching effect of the early bustle to remark their close structural similarity. In 1880, when hair at the back became short and smooth, dresses became smooth over the

hips also. The same phenomenon is to be remarked in the late nineteen-twenties, and, indeed, in the early years of the nineteenth century; but this is perhaps more easily seen by a moment's comparison of fashion plates and caricatures of these periods than by any amount of descriptive writing.

In 1794 immediately after the Terror the forms of hairdressing were still very largely those which had prevailed before the French Revolution. The general form was that of a man's wig except for the heavier mass of hair behind. From the front, however, the rather disordered lawyer's wig effect was very marked both in masculine and feminine *coiffures*. The hair was still powdered, and there was little to show that a fundamental change was about to take place. Hats were perched on the top of the head, and in 1795 there was much use of caps. Sometimes these were long and falling over to the side like the cap of Liberty; sometimes they were flat on the top of the head and ornamented with plumes. 1796 saw the advent of a straw hat, in shape very much like a man's top-hat, but with a wavy brim, worn sideways or backward on the head, with a wreath of flowers round the crown. The hair in this year was loose and unpowdered. Two years later the classical, pointed, tapering headdress had imposed its shape on the enveloping hats. White soft caps were worn, or else helmets like bonnets with ribbon, the crown very deep and stretching backward.

With the year 1800 and the advent of shorter hair bonnets were more circular, and in spite of the slight retrogression in the following year to the helmet bonnets of 1798, the very small circular bonnet, enclosing a fairly closely cropped head, remained in force for almost the next decade. 1805 was the year of very small bonnets, and in the following year appeared some small poke bonnets, rather like those of the fifties, but worn at a slightly different angle. In 1807 occurred the oddity of providing similar bonnets with very long wings concealing the face. This fashion was the joy of the caricaturist, but did not last for very long.

In 1808 the bonnet is practically the poke, that form which, with slight variations, was to remain in force for the next fifty years. Hats in this year were chiefly made of Florence straw, with

a low dome crown. Sometimes they were covered with silk, preferably of the same silk as the dress.

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider what the poke bonnet was that it should have had the power to impose itself for such a long period as almost the only possible type of female headgear. It was originally the wide-brimmed country hat of straw. Already in the seventeen-eighties people had discovered how very attractive it could be made to look by having the ribbons not inside the hat, but outside, so that the side-brims were bent down over the cheek. This is the whole essence of the poke bonnet, and all variations consist in lowering or deepening the height of the crown and varying the width of the brim. In 1812 the crown of the hat was extremely high, and stuck straight up into the air, in order to accommodate the growing complication of the feminine *coiffure*. The brim was very small, but grew larger in the following year. In 1813 there was for a short period a fashion for transparent brims, allowing the face to be seen even from the side. In 1814 the hat was still higher in the crown, but wider in the brim, and was brought down sharp at the sides in order to touch the cheek. The hat was set at such an angle upon the head that the brim rose steeply from the forehead, and provided each female face with a high but narrowed halo. To youthful faces this was extremely becoming, especially as now the hair was trimmed in bands with very few curls, leaving the ears exposed. The same year, however, saw the introduction of hair *à la Van Dyck*, the forerunner of all those Caroline modes which were to last until the end of the forties. The growing elaboration of side-curls towards the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century marks the abandonment of short hair until something like sixty years later.

There was a transient fashion for the Oldenburg bonnet introduced by the beautiful Duchess of Oldenburg when she visited England in 1818. This bonnet with its extreme width of brim, resembled the blinkers worn by carriage horses. It was tremendously warm to wear, and made it very difficult to see the face of the wearer. Caricatures of the period show a gentleman's difficulty in making love to anyone wearing such a bonnet. The

BLOUSES: 1895, 1908, 1920, 1928

HATS: 1847, 1878, 1893, 1905, 1924, 1928

effect of many of them collected in a small space was ludicrous in the extreme. The Oldenburg bonnet was succeeded very rapidly by what was called the simple cottage bonnet.

Nothing is more curious than the behaviour of bonnets during the eighteen-twenties. In 1819 the high brim of the poke bonnet shows a strange tendency to dip in the middle. Now there is only one way in which this can be managed—by loosening the strings which hold the sides of the bonnet against the cheek. This tendency was helped by the side-curls already mentioned, and as in fashion a feature of this kind tends to exaggerate itself to the utmost limit, by the year 1822 the dip in the middle of the brim of the bonnet had spread outward, and the tightness of the string had been released to such an extent that what had been a bonnet had now become a hat.

This hat was worn high on the head, the sides not being pulled down by ribbon; what ribbons there were were fastened inside instead of outside the hat, so that they did not depress the side-brims. Once the hat had been established it tended to grow larger and larger, and by 1826 was immense, probably larger in this year and the two years following than it was ever to be again till 1911, with a mass of trimmings, plumes, etc., on the top to make it more elaborate. The hair to support this structure was parted in the middle and developed a multitude of side-curls. In 1827 and 1828 there were still larger hats. So universal was the passion for these hats that they were worn with dinner dresses, and even, incredible as it seems, at the opera, where they must have effectively prevented the gentlemen in the back of the boxes from seeing anything at all. The dress hat, often of pink satin, with trimmings of rich white blond, plumes, etc., is very characteristic of the late twenties. It was sometimes slashed at the side in imitation of the large hats of the German *Lanzknechts* of the early sixteenth century. But the rage for *toques à créneaux* has been discussed in the chapter on Romanticism.

The hair in the late twenties was gradually getting higher and higher, until at last it reached the 'giraffe'—a bow of hair, or two, or even three, bows, raised on triangular pins laid on the surface and fastened skilfully to the hair. Over this rose the bow called,

in compliment to the first appearance of two giraffes in England, 'the giraffe bow.'

By 1829 the hat gave signs of slipping back from the head. This necessitated the cutting away of the brim at the back, and when ribbons were reintroduced outside the side-brims, instead of inside, the hat was on its way to becoming a bonnet again. The three following years saw this tendency confirmed. By 1834 the poke bonnet was once more universal, and except for the height of the crown, which was now much lower, it was very similar to the poke bonnet of 1817, with a circular front brim closely squeezed in at the sides and very high in front of the head. Brims grew wider still as the thirties progressed, reaching their extreme about 1837.

The middle thirties had seen the abandonment of the extremely complicated hairdressing of the earlier years of the decade, and the introduction of styles which left the hair flat on top and draped it in various ways over the ears, either in lap-dog fashion or with circular plaits in the mode of the early portraits of Queen Victoria. There was now no reason for the high-crown hat, and the brims also showed a tendency to decrease. There was a notable diminution in 1839, and one still more remarkable in 1840, the same year which saw the introduction of much thicker side-curls culminating in the famous corkscrews. These masses of corkscrew curls at the side of the head were part of a prevalent enthusiasm for anything connected with the early seventeenth century. There is the closest parallel between the *coiffure* of the ladies of the Court of Henrietta Maria and that of the ladies of the Court of the young Queen Victoria. By 1841 bonnets were very much smaller, and in the following year the true poke was reached, the poke bonnet being a hat of which crown and brim form the same straight line from front to back, producing a structure resembling the old-fashioned coal-scuttle. These true pokes with their accompanying side-curls were the vogue throughout the eighteen-forties and the early fifties.

In 1854 a strange thing happened; the poke bonnet, which seemed to have established itself for ever, retained its essential form, but began to slip backward over the head and to grow smaller. Side-curls were now gone. The general *coiffure* had a

waved effect on either side of the central parting. By 1857 the hair was smoothed over the ears, and any curls which existed were at the back of the head. The bonnet continued to slip backward, exposing the front half of the head.

In the early sixties it became the fashion to wear *parures* of natural flowers in the hair, corresponding if possible with the bouquet in the hand. A contemporary remarks:

> A *parure* of flowers consisting of two flowers mingled is elegant; for instance, the rose and heliotrope, the *parure* forming the wreath which extends down the skirt, or of white flowers—the acacia—of blue, the myosotis—of green, the maidenhair fern. These are all exquisite ornaments. Even the large white lily forms a beautiful *parure*. . . . Nothing forms a more beautiful headdress than natural flowers carefully mounted. The French have a great art of mounting flowers on wire, and many of the ladies' maids learn it. Some of the ladies excel in it themselves. For country balls and fêtes the effect is lovely, and the perpetual variety obtained a source of that surprise and novelty which adds so much to the effect produced by dress. The flowers should be neatly and firmly stuck upon wire. Variegated geraniums and all the white varieties only answer well—white camellias (the red are too heavy), parti-coloured carnations, the *rosa devoniensis*, large white lilies, are all suitable for hairs of various shades. A *parure* of ivy is elegant—but it has become common; in spring the scarlet ranunculus has a rich effect; in winter the hellebore or Christmas rose is very appropriate.

The early sixties also saw the reintroduction of hats with the curious depression in front which so often marks the transition from bonnet to hat, and which we have already remarked in the early eighteen-twenties. In 1864 the bonnet was still farther back, but was worn higher to accommodate the rising *coiffure*. Two years later the bonnet had become so small that it was almost a cap, worn in the same position as a skull-cap on a man. In reaction against this, in 1867 appeared little round hats perched forward on the forehead, and this tendency continued for some years, although in 1871 it was the fashion to wear very small bonnets on the very top of the head. In 1872 the two forms of hat and bonnet showed a tendency to behave in different ways, the hat perching forward once more, the bonnet perching far back; and as the hair was now very high behind and with long, trailing curls at the

nape of the neck, these two tendencies were exaggerated. For the greater part of the decade *coiffures* were extremely elaborate.

In 1879 the *coiffure* suddenly became much smaller. In 1880 hair was worn in a little coil at the back, very short, with a fringe. This was a passing mode. The following year saw the introduction of back hair again, with bonnets perched on the very top of the head. There were also small hats worn rigidly upright. In the following year these took the form of little tapering top hats with upright plumes. The middle of the eighties is remarkable for its extremely small hats on the top of the head, and two years later very sharp-pointed hats, high and narrow, echoed the general lines of the dress, which was showing a tendency to rise sharply at the shoulders into exaggerated points. Hats varied during the next few years in the most extraordinary fashion, being wider in 1889 and 1891 and 1893, and smaller in 1890 and 1892. It is difficult in these years of transition to show any straight line of development or make any valuable deduction.

Hats in 1903 were very flat on top and worn very far forward on the head, so that while they projected only about an inch behind they sometimes stuck out in front for eight or nine inches. They were made of an extraordinary variety of material: pink velvet with lace or brown fur; white felt with green velvet twisted round the crown, and with a couple of long feathers in a deeper shade curling round the brim; royal blue toques with single large green quills. There was a passion for Neapolitan violets in little bunches distributed over the hat, and for the ugly-named macaroons in black or brown velvet which were much used on light felt hats. These consisted of a flat wooden circle covered with dark velvet, rather like a pierrot's pompon. A fashion writer of the period makes the curious observation that it was now necessary to have the top view of hats carefully considered owing to the view of them which could be obtained from the galleries of skating rinks.

In 1908 *coiffures* were very elaborate. A commentator of the period remarks:

> Hairdressing is an art which is all-important at present. The Early Victorian woman could perhaps dress her head with her own

locks alone and be in the mode. Not so the Edwardian fashionable person. For her it is better to give up the struggle to be natural at once and fall back on the hairdresser's art. If you are not in the foremost flight of time and have a sufficiency of hair you may wave it and turn it loosely back over the Pompadour pad, fluff it out well at the sides, and so pass muster: but the innumerable little curls that are now the fashion can hardly be achieved satisfactorily on the head by the best-endowed with locks. A bunch of curls forming a Greek chignon at the back is almost necessary, and a few little ringlets at the side also just over the ears help a wide hat to sit on becomingly, or in the evening, after threading through a ribbon the colour of the gown, which is a charming finish. A plait is drawn right round the head from the back in some cases, and long hair that grows on the head can thus be utilized to advantage under the hairdresser's curls. If you abhor false hair you must do the best you can, but you will hardly be able to appear quite fashionable save in the rare case of possessing the combination of an exceptional quantity of natural locks and the services of a very clever maid.

With such elaborate headdressing flower-wreathed hats were fashionable, the low-crowned shape being usually adorned with so compact and full a line of large blossoms that the crown had to be taken for granted and was invisible from the front view. Dahlias were much used for the purpose; also purple passion-flowers. There was also a rage for camellias, the stiff white waxen-like blossoms set closely side by side all round the hat.

The novelty of the season of 1908 was to make little hats entirely of black fox-fur, or to use this fur as a trimming on a shape of satin or of Ottoman silk. The growing prevalence of motoring, however, was already beginning to war against extremely large hats, and for this then rather adventurous sport smaller hats were recommended of stitched tweed trimmed with small bunches of grouse or pheasant feathers. Still more popular were the little cottage bonnets similar to those of Victorian times. The latest trimmings for these motor bonnets, we are told, were "rose-buds, cunningly constructed in satin, sulphur yellow, pink, and mauve having all been seen, used as clusters inside the straw shape, one bunch set above either ear, and set round in lace frilling inside the slightly raised brim."

The influence of a prevailing style of hat upon fashions in hair-

dressing is plainly seen in 1909, when hats were flat and extremely wide. A contemporary commentator notes:

> While our hats remain in their present form it is necessary to have hair well puffed out over the ears and above the temple, or else one looks perfectly extinguished.

This was undeniable, and even for evening wear the forms of *coiffure* remained the same, being, indeed, even more elaborate, with side-curls or curl clusters. As very few women had enough hair to meet the requirements of the mode the hairdressers drove a thriving trade in additional curls.

In the following year hats remained extremely wide, two typical examples being of chipped straw surmounted by a mass of plumes and of white lace on a wire framework, crowned with mauve flowers.

In the second half of the year an attempt to bring in a high hat, tipped well to the back of the head, was made, but this mode was not to find full favour until some years later. Meanwhile women who did not wish to wear the extremely wide hats could always assume the toque. Toques of feathers in all colours were worn, but the favourite material was velvet.

It was in 1911 that the hat assumed its most startling dimensions. These hats, together with the extremely narrow skirts of the period, gave women the appearance of an isosceles triangle standing on its point. This mode was the very opposite of the mode of the sixties. Hats became so large that they were a positive encumbrance, not only in buses and railway carriages, but in the streets, and several people were injured by the savagely workmanlike hatpins which were necessary to keep them in position. So great was the danger from hatpins that a device was introduced resembling an acorn filled with cork, which was used to protect the point, so that the hatpin now had the appearance of possessing two butt ends, only the real butt end was very much larger than the other, and sometimes assumed the dimensions of a small tangerine orange. So large were the hats themselves that *Punch* could represent two ladies of fashion going to the Private View of the Academy under one hat, a measure which not only provoked attention, but was a

positive economy, seeing that hats at this period were necessarily extremely expensive.

When they had grown as big as cartwheels the moment for reaction had obviously arrived, and early in 1912 the long-prophesied high hats at last made their appearance. They were themselves very high, and they were made higher by trimming, for it was the fashion to surmount them by a single plume or other device, pointing rigidly upward. By the middle of 1912 we find complaints, in the more conservative journals, against the absurdity of high hats with bolt-upright trimmings, which consisted either of the single plume already mentioned or of intricate twists of ribbon supported on a wire, or of spikes of such upstanding flowers as hollyhocks. Sometimes a whirl of white lace was wired into a tall aigrette, and sometimes aigrettes themselves were used. The huge cartwheel hat had vanished, and at the moment of writing has not yet returned, although it would be rash to prophesy that it will never do so.

In 1913 there was a considerable reduction in the size of hats and a corresponding decrease in size in hairdressing. Some fashionable women in Paris wore their hair comparatively close, and over it little wigs which disdained deception, for they were coloured in all the tints of the palette except those of natural hair; but this fashion never spread to the general public, or even among the fashionable in England.

In the same year the plumes, which had formerly stood bolt upright, began to project at all kinds of odd and alarming angles. It was considered chic to have two feathers pointing in opposite directions, and this is the characteristic headdress of the years before the First World War, and even of the first two years of the conflict. The first effect of the outbreak of hostilities was to introduce a note of sobriety into hats as well as into dresses. It was bad form to show much ostentation in dress; but the dominant note of the widely separated plume reappears in 1917, and continues into the next year.

In 1917 the most popular *coiffure* was of a classical form, with a coil of hair at the back of the head worn rather high, just behind the crown; but those engaged in war work had already found the

convenience of short hair, although it was by no means so short as it was afterwards to become. Even before the War Bohemian and intellectual women had bobbed their hair, as can be seen quite plainly in some of the early canvases of Augustus John. The bob was not really very short; it imitated the fifteenth-century page, allowing the hair to fall straight down from the parting to the level of the chin, where it was cut off in a sharp horizontal line. By the middle of 1918 we begin to find jokes about young women whose contribution to war work has consisted in cutting off their hair—that is, in having it bobbed. The hat in most general use was a kind of large billycock, fitting loosely on the head, the ancestor of the later ubiquitous *cloche*.

In 1919 the Greek *coiffure* among the fashionable was pushed to an extreme, an immense bun or cone of hair sticking out at the back of the head in a horizontal direction. This, however, could not last. In times of war and social upheaval the tendency for women to cut off their hair seems to be almost irresistible, and by 1923 to bob or not to bob had become one of the holiday problems.

1924 was in some ways a reactionary year, for not only were skirts longer, but hats were once again large, although not nearly so large as they had been in 1910 and 1911. Meanwhile the bob, which did not suit all faces, was being gradually abandoned in favour of the shingle, which abolished the long, hanging strands of hair and made the *coiffure* follow much more closely the line of the head. The shingle is quite usual in 1925, and we find a 'man-woman' in *Punch* complaining: "In the old days I never paid more than sixpence for a haircut; now they call it a shingle-trim and charge me three and sixpence." A new era of prosperity had opened in the hairdressing profession, for by a curious paradox hairdressers never flourished so mightily as in the days when women wore short hair.

In the same year, 1925, are the first signs of the real *cloche* hat, a type of headgear which was to become the very tyrant of the mode for the next five years. It consisted of a hat with a very narrow brim and a crown which fitted closely over the head like a helmet. Such hats became universal, and as it was impossible to wear them with a bun or back hair of any kind, women who wished









HAIRDRESSING

1810	1827	1841
1853	1862	1873
1882	1893	1904

HAIRDRESSING

1912 1916 1921

1924 1928

1930 1935

to be in the mode at all were compelled to cut off their locks. In vain old-fashioned gentlemen exclaimed that hair was a woman's crowning glory; in vain old-fashioned ladies strove to find a hat which they could possibly wear. There seemed to be no alternative; and it is an astonishing thought that in the years between 1925 and 1930 the vast majority of women in Western Europe, with the exception of Spain, must have cut off their hair.

The tyrant of the mode, however, was not yet satisfied, and early in 1927 or late '26 the shingle was succeeded by the Eton crop. Those women who adopted it cropped their hair as closely as a schoolboy, and, indeed, there was often nothing to distinguish them from schoolboys but their rouged lips and pencilled eyebrows. Short of shaving the head, this particular fashion could obviously go no farther, and in 1929 we begin to see the first signs of reaction.

The theory that the back of a woman's head often echoes in some mysterious fashion the form of the back of the skirt has been already mentioned. One has only to compare the bustle of 1873 with the back hair of the same period, or the smooth over-the-hips effect of 1880, or the Eton crop and straight skirts of 1927; and it is interesting to note that when in 1929 skirts began to dip downward at the back, hair did exactly the same. In that year the shingle began to be augmented by a tiny little bun or roll at the nape of the neck. In the early thirties this had grown into a curl—only slight perhaps, but sufficient to mark the beginning of an entirely different mode. No longer were hairdressers called upon to shave the nape of the neck. A more feminine style of hairdressing went with more feminine modes of dress. The new fashion in hair, timid though it was, led to the end of the *cloche* hat. It disappeared quite abruptly, but no definite universal form took its place. In fact, women's hats have been a little mad ever since, as if to repay themselves for their long uniformity and asceticism.

By the end of the twenties the *cloche* hat had come to seem an intolerable tyranny to wearers and to designers alike. It was at first cut a little higher at the back, to make room for the nape-of-the-neck curl, which was now becoming common. And then, as if in echo of the asymmetrical forms of dresses, it acquired a brim

all on one side, preferably the right-hand side of the head. This brim gives the hats of 1930 a very odd look; it is as if women were provided with one blinker, but unfortunately, so far as London traffic was concerned, the blinker was on the wrong side, for it prevented the wearer, when stepping off the pavement, from seeing the oncoming traffic. In Paris, of course, this disadvantage was not so apparent. But all the modifications of the *cloche* which are to be seen in 1930 seem to be a matter of manipulating the brim, turning it back from the forehead, turning it up on one side of the face, allowing it to stretch down the neck like the helmet of a coal-man, or simply—especially for summer hats—making the brim very much larger than it had been for almost a decade. If, however, the crown of the hat fits closely on to the head a wide brim is never very convenient, and, apart from Ascot, the wide brims of 1930 did not long endure.

The actual dressing of the hair altered very little, although fashionable *coiffeurs* now began to advertize the charm of curls, very small curls, it is true, and only on the fringes of the hair, never on the crown. A special mode was introduced for those who were growing their hair, such now being the ambition of nearly every woman, and to aid her over the difficult period a special slide was invented which rested on the nape of the neck and kept the short, straggling ends in place.

The year 1932 saw a disappearance of the brim; hats became smaller than ever. They no longer fitted over the head like a helmet. Instead they perched on one side of the head, preferably the right, but sometimes also on the left, and at so acute an angle as almost to obscure one eye, and always one ear. With sundry modifications this is the hat which has endured ever since. One important result of the new kind of hat was that it made it possible to wear an eye-veil, which would have been ridiculous with a *cloche*, and such eye-veils became very popular. Agnès introduced the fashion of putting the hat on the back of the head and filling up the forehead space with bows, flowers, or the like; but this device never became very common. It was in 1933 that Schiaparelli startled the world by making a hat out of a woollen sock. All kinds of knitted hats came back into favour, and the angle at

which hats were worn promoted an attempt to design models on the lines of page-boys' pill-boxes or the old-fashioned forage-cap.

For Ascot 1933 hats were in general small and, unlike hats for ordinary occasions, lavishly adorned with flowers. The angle usually adopted was still rigorously over one eye. For ordinary wear knitted hats were much in favour, *Vogue* in May 1933 containing directions for "a crochet sailor hat and a knitted Tunisian fez." In 1934 the Tyrolean hat made its appearance, and the vogue for everything Austrian continued almost until the outbreak of Hitler's War. Hairdressing became much more complicated, the *coiffeurs* vying with one another to produce new treatments. Sometimes the head was covered with a multitude of tight curls; sometimes a sculptured effect was aimed at. There was a brief vogue for the windswept style of hairdressing, and none of these modes was impeded by the hats of the day, as they would have been by the *cloche*. A novelty of 1934 was the Cossack headdress, which consisted of a tube of astrakhan squashed down on one side of the head, like a shako from which all the stuffing had been removed. In 1935 there was a vogue for flat hats with rather wide brims, Chinese 'coolie' hats, and similar shapes. The form of the Cossack hat was continued in the so-called pouch hat of the following year. They were, as the name implies, mere pouches of soft material; sometimes they were square, and might have been handbags set on the head at a sharp angle. Hats, in fact, as the thirties progressed, grew madder and madder, and it is still too early to announce any essential change. Hairdressing seemed to show two opposite tendencies: one, a building up of the hair at the back, not in the form of a bun, but of massed curls; this tended to throw whatever hat was worn forward. On the other hand, a type of hairdressing was devised which surrounded the head as with a wreath of curls, taken quite high off the forehead. With such a *coiffure* it was difficult to wear even the little hats implied by the mode, and to take their place a kind of skull-cap was devised known as the Juliet hat, which fitted on to the crown of the head like the cap of a Renaissance page-boy, leaving a fringe of curls all round. Developments during the War years will be dealt with in the final chapter.

Chapter XI

CORSETS

No historian of feminine fashion can afford to neglect the corset, that strange device by which women have sought to preserve beyond the age of adolescence the lines of beauty. As those lines have varied from age to age, according to the changing æsthetic of successive periods, so the corset itself has changed, being now a sheath, now no more than a girdle, now forcing upward the bosom, now striving to abolish it altogether, now confining, now exaggerating the hips, now leaving the waist almost free and now pinching it in cruelly, so that women looked more like wasps than human beings. The history of the corset is the history of many other things besides, and it is certain that no understanding of fashion is possible without it.

As early as the end of the twelfth century we find references in literature to tight lacing. By the end of the thirteenth a wide belt or bandeau pushed up the bust and narrowly confined the waist. The *cotte*, the essential feminine garment of the period, was a sort of blouse based on a narrow corset. Sometimes the robes themselves moulded the figure, and were laced now in front, now at the back. At the end of the fifteenth century the function of the corset was performed by wide stiff belts, which served to raise the bust. We find the moralists of the period exclaiming equally against the daring décolletage of robes and the excessive narrowness of the waist.[1] Already at the same period we see the first attempts to fluff out the skirt in order to make the apparent size of the waist smaller, an artifice which is to be one of the principal elements in the changes of fashion throughout a great part of the nineteenth century. Libron and Clouzot remark very justly that early in the sixteenth century under the names of *basquine* and *vertugale* the corset and the crinoline had already begun their reign.

[1] A list of literary references and a full account of all other matters relating to the corset will be found in the monumental work of F. Libron and H. Clouzot: *Le Corset dans l'Art et les Mœurs du XIIIe au XXe Siècle* (Paris, 1923).

The *basquine* was a kind of little doublet without sleeves, enclosing the whole of the upper part of the torso. It was not yet stiffened with whalebone or metal, but was probably lined with stiff, reinforced cloth to give the same effect. The *vertugale* soon took the form of a kind of cartwheel, and was frequently stiffened with buckram.

The second half of the sixteenth century was the period of the busk, a rigid bar which kept the front of the *corsage* in position. This rigid bar was at first so long that it stretched from a point between the breasts to very low down on the abdomen. Fortunately, it could in moments of relaxation be taken out. It is now thought that the iron corsets such as are to be seen in the Musée Cluny are rather instruments for correcting humped backs than genuine articles of general feminine attire.

Both busk and *vertugale*, now called *vertugadin*, lasted till well into the seventeenth century, but the *vertugadin* became much smaller about 1640, except in Spain, where it persisted long enough to give rise, as some think, to the panniers of the early eighteenth century. In the last period of the reign of Louis XIV the *corps*, the ancestor of the corset, showed a tendency to detach itself from the robe, and strips of iron or wood gave place to whalebone as being more flexible.

The corset, although it was not yet called by that name, ruled supreme over the feminine mode till amost the end of the eighteenth century, and it was laced sometimes in front, sometimes behind. When laced in front it was often used as a decorative adjunct to dress. Sometimes a piece of embroidered stuff was used to hide the lacing, sometimes this was frankly displayed; but for the greater part of the century a laced *corps* of some sort was considered necessary even for quite young girls, and not to wear one was the mark of the countrywoman from a place too remote to have any tincture of civilization. However, in the seventies the vogue for *déshabillés* brought in a corset without stiffening of any kind other than the slight rigidity of the cloth of which it was made. But the corset lasted until the French Revolution, and the Musée Carnavalet still preserves the one which was worn by Marie-Antoinette in prison.

One of the first effects of the Revolution, or rather of the Directoire—for Revolutionary influences in costume did not make themselves felt until after the end of the Terror—was the reduction of the corset to a simple girdle. This transformation is attributed by most authors partly at least to English influence, for the *émigrés* saw in Hyde Park the corset reduced to its most simple expression. During the worst excesses of the Directoire the corset disappeared altogether, as being inconsistent both with the classical ideals which the women of the period professed, and with the licence which they practised. The effect of the corset was, however, sometimes gained by a kind of brassière, or simply by a narrow shawl, worn like a scarf and crossed at the back like a pair of men's braces.

In 1799 waists were worn so high that the robe itself served as a kind of *soutien-gorge*. A year or two later corsets had reappeared, but as waists were still worn extremely high it was impossible for the corset to assume its characteristic form.

As we have noted, between the Peace of Amiens and the abdication of Napoleon a curious divergence appeared in English and French modes. The two nations were cut off from each other, and the English developed their own corset, as can be seen quite plainly from the fashion plates of 1812, when the waist seems to have returned to normal. A caricature of 1814 (see plate opposite p. 22) shows that when the English flocked to Paris in that year they astonished the Parisiennes by their normal waistline. In this contest the French mode was victorious; waists became high again, and remained so until 1820.

The abandonment of the essential line of the Empire began in 1819. Gradually the waist, which had remained high for nearly twenty years, sank lower and lower, and in 1825 it may be said to have become universally normal. The corset was by now worn by nearly every woman, and had assumed the form which it was to keep right up to the end of the century.

Corset-making took an important place among the industries of France. In 1828 the metal eyelet hole was invented (the holes for the lacing cord having been previously cut in the cloth and reinforced with buttonhole stitch), and it became possible to lace

corsets even more tightly. Towards 1830 corsets began to be worn not only by fashionable women, but by every woman in every rank of society.

Already in the early fifties there were protests against the unfortunate effects of tight lacing. Doctors gave it as their opinion that owing to stiff stays seven women in ten were crooked and whole families leaned on one side or the other. "You are no worse than your neighbours," was the common expression of any surgeon called in to attend in a case of curvature of the spine. It was strongly recommended—and that such a recommendation was necessary is sufficiently astonishing—that no girl should wear bones or steel until she had done growing. Until then a bodice, close-fitting but not tight, or even a mere flannel waistcoat, was all that should be allowed.

The universality of the corset throughout the nineteenth century gives a certain family look to even the widest divergencies of the mode, and throughout the greater part of that period the corset retained the same form, which might be compared with the shape of a double eggcup. The year 1873, however—which was a period of high *corsages*—saw the introduction of the *cuirasse* corset. This was provided with what was called a 'spoon busk,' narrow at the top and wide at the bottom, a form which was accentuated until 1882, and disappeared at the end of the decade. In the eighties most busks were made of steel, and various improvements were introduced in the method of fastening. The favourite Victorian device—which lasted almost until our own day—consisted of two strips of steel, one provided with little knobs or catches and the other with specially shaped buttonholes. This enabled the corset to be fastened and unfastened easily, without any danger of its coming undone by inadvertence.

In 1880 the corset became for a time almost the most striking part of feminine costume. It was very narrow at the waist; it accentuated the hips, and it pushed up the bust almost under the chin. A new kind of corset, the so-called Pompadour corset, pointed in front and behind, was not attached to the hips at all. The corset was, as it were, worn over the skirt, which accounts for the characteristic appearance of all costumes of this period. The

mode, however, did not persist, for by 1885 a new bustle had been introduced, and dresses were no longer smooth over the hips behind.

In the middle eighties rubber suspenders made their first appearance on corsets, although something of the same kind had been known since the middle of the century, when ribbons were sometimes sewn to the corset, and passed through buckles which fastened the stocking. Garters, however, were still worn. In 1889 a rigid busk was introduced which curved inward over the waist and outward over the abdomen. Five years later the corset had become shorter and was cut away over the hips. It was heavily boned, and the busk was straighter. The breasts were separated by groups of short bones called *divorces*. These, however, did very little to alter the essential forms of dress, and it was not until 1902 that any important modifications were to be seen. In that year corsets became for the first time straight in front, although Jean Worth had already tried to impose a similar fashion in 1888 under the name of *corsets Louis XV*.

In so doing he had been inspired by the writings of a certain Dr Frantz, who complained that the accepted form of the corset, with its persistent downward pressure, deranged the position of the internal organs and led to many ailments. Worth's attempts, however, were unsuccessful, and it was not until the opening of the new century that any important change appeared.

In 1902 Gaches-Sarraute invented a corset which supported the abdomen from below, the front of the bodice being made absolutely straight by a rigid busk. There was something to be said for this innovation from the medical point of view, but fashion cares little for hygiene, and two years later straight-fronted corsets had been exaggerated to such an extent that they too had become a danger to health. The abdomen had ceased to exist, all the fullness being thrown upward into the stomach and the chest. The waist was excessively narrow, and there was a violent bend in the body at the back—how violent we may see by studying any illustration of corsets of the period. With the so-called princess robe no corsets were necessary, as this was already sufficiently boned, but it produced the same deformation of the feminine figure.

THE CORSET, 1810
Etching by J. Gillray

THE CORSET, 1837
From *Modes de Paris*
From the original, in the collection of Vyvyan Holland, Esq.

Corsets: 1900, 1904, 1911, 1928, 1935

By this time there was a considerable outcry against the corset on health grounds; and so formidable was the array of hostile medical opinion that some countries—notably Russia, Bavaria, and Rumania—began to legislate against corsets, forbidding them altogether for the use of growing girls.

The *corset-tailleur* was something of a new departure. An advertiser of 1908, who described himself as "not merely a corset-maker, but a corset artist," offered

> a really high-class corset at a popular price, built on an entirely new principle. It is cut very full about the waist, and the bust is short; the lacing can be regulated to ensure a perfectly trim figure and to act as a bust bodice. It holds and supports the bust without raising it. This point has made it indispensable for use in tailor-made gowns, where a trim and neat figure is essential.

The corset, in other words, had risen so far that it was provided with shoulder-straps, an invention with a purpose similar to that of the reinforced bust bodice, or American bodice, which "entirely supersedes the old style of camisole, gives support to the back, hides the line of the corset when wearing thin or lace blouses, and can be worn without a lining, while easily removable for washing." Suspenders were now universal, as doctors had condemned the use of garters as being liable to produce varicose veins.

In 1910 corsets were shorter at the top, but extended lower over the hips. They were still very straight in front, but the waist was very much less slender than it had been. The freeing of the bust led to the beginning of the brassière industry, which now, after a period of eclipse in the twenties, when women were supposed to have no bust at all, has received a new fillip from present-day fashion. In 1911 slim hips became the fashion, perhaps for the first time in the whole history of costume. The bust was very large, but the corset did not begin until just above the waist, and then extended downward, sometimes with two very long busks, which could not, however, extend to the bottom of the corset, for it would then have been impossible for the wearer to sit down. In 1912 we find a joke in *Punch* about corsets which are so long that they can be buttoned under the instep, and are given the humorous name of 'spat corsets'; but in actual fact corsets did sometimes

descend almost to the knee, and this mode persisted till the outbreak of the European War—at least, among women with some pretension to elegance.

As early as 1911, however, some women had begun to wear a belt which simply covered the hips and ended at the waist. It was made of vulcanized rubber cloth with hardly any bones, and was the ancestor of an innumerable progeny. During the War it became almost universal—at least among younger women—but the more practical *tricot* took the place of vulcanized rubber cloth.

The effect of the War and the period immediately after it in bringing in a preference for the extremely juvenile figure caused the corset to shrink to a mere girdle supporting the stockings, and as every woman now apparently wished to emulate the flat-chestedness of the 'flapper' the bust disappeared altogether. To conform to the accepted type many women were compelled to wear 'correctors' or flatteners, as absurd and deleterious a fashion as had been those previous modes which unduly constricted the waist. The female torso became a flattened tube, and the body was as wide at the waist as at the hips. The corset, properly so called, had been abolished, but the corset belt, which had taken its place, was worn universally. For the use of young women it ended at the waist, and for older women it only took in the bust in order to compress it. In its extended form it was known as a *combinaire*, and in its uncompromising severity of outline is very typical of the feminine æsthetic of the nineteen-twenties.

In 1929 we find the first timid beginnings of a change. Corset-makers began to acknowledge the existence of the breasts by providing the *combinaire* with two little pockets to accommodate them. The dominant idea, however, was still that they should be as flat as possible.

In 1930 the new line is more plainly visible. An advertiser announces: "Once more you are to look feminine, really feminine this time, with graceful curves, natural waistline, and longer skirts." He declares that in his new corset every type of figure has been studied, and a model designed to meet every need. He offers "corselettes, wrap-arounds, and step-ins for day wear," and for the evening "the daintiest imaginable shadow garments."

The tight-lacing which some had feared from the reintroduction of the normal waistline was, however, kept at bay, and has continued to be kept at bay by the pronounced fashion for extremely smooth and narrow hips. That the waist, however, has been reintroduced can be seen from the study of any contemporary corset advertisement. The fundamental fact of feminine fashion of the thirties has been the frank re-emergence of the bust, or rather, to speak plainly, of the breasts, for the bust is no longer the unified protuberance which it was at the beginning of the century: the corset ends at the waist, with the addition of a brassière above, or else brassière and corset are combined in one single garment. In both styles the effect is the same. The old ideal of flat-chestedness has disappeared completely, and modern corsets follow the actual line of the figure. They still contain hardly any boning, and are probably the most comfortable and hygienic foundation garments that have ever been worn. Innumerable varieties have been introduced, especially those intended to be worn under sports clothes, and it is interesting to note that corsets to be worn underneath bathing costumes have just made their reappearance. They are very light, flexible, and washable, but they are corsets none the less.

He would be a rash man who would speculate on the future of the corset. It has assumed so many forms, most of them irrational, if not positively harmful, in the past; but it seems to disappear completely only in periods of great social upheaval and general moral disorder. Most women, as soon as they are past their first youth, find some form of support necessary, and the flexible belt-corset and brassière are probably the best solution of the problem. But if the world ever settles down again into a new period of sound money and political security it is probable that heavily boned corsets and pinched-in waists will once more make their appearance. Those who imagine that women have escaped for ever from encumbering garments and imprisoning corsets would do well to study the story of feminine dress from 1795 to 1830. It is possible that only the universal extension of athletic sport will prevent the repetition of such a development. Meanwhile we can only be thankful that the corset of to-day is so healthy, so sensible, and so æsthetically pleasing.

Chapter XII

LINGERIE

THE full history of underclothes has yet to be written, and perhaps only a German savant could do the subject full justice, for the earlier part of the story at least is rather difficult to come by, and necessitates an extensive acquaintance with erotic and scandalous prints. It was not until the eighteenth century that artists really penetrated into the feminine boudoir and showed us the women of the period at all stages of the toilet. *Le Monument du Costume*, published in the second half of the eighteenth century, is a mine of information on such matters, and the story is taken up by the creators of *estampes galantes*, whose work continued throughout the earlier part of the nineteenth. As soon as advertisements of underclothes begin to appear, which is some time in the late eighties or early nineties, the path of the historian is easy enough, and now the observer need do nothing but walk for a while in front of the shop windows of the great stores in order to obtain an exact documentation of those clothes which women find it necessary to wear under the clothes which they display in the street and at evening parties.

The earlier part of the history of underclothes is obscure by reason of its very simplicity, for there were really no underclothes as we know them. Everybody, men and women alike, wore a shirt or shift, a loose linen garment, extremely simple in structure, however complicated may have been the lace trimming at neck and wrist. Up to almost the end of the eighteenth century men and women both wore what was in essence a shirt—in winter two shirts—and over this they put their ordinary garments. But the extreme simplification of clothes—that is, outdoor and visible clothes—which set in during the Directoire period necessitated an increasing complication of underwear.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, as a cartoon of Gillray dated 1810 informs us, some women at least wore panta-

loons, as well as shifts. In the late seventeen-nineties, owing to the extreme transparency of outer garments, they had sometimes worn complete outfits of tights, sometimes white, sometimes flesh-coloured. By 1810 the pantaloons for women, or bloomers (although the name was not yet invented, for Mrs Bloomer had not yet made her appearance), were fairly tight, and in structure closely resembled the knee-breeches of the age which had just pased. A woman dressing began by putting on her shift; she then added these pantaloons, then one or more petticoats, and then the corset. She was then ready to add the outer garment.

Shifts and pantaloons were mostly made of linen, its fineness varying according to the taste and wealth of the wearer. Petticoats were sometimes of linen and sometimes of flannel, and in the forties, when six or seven was the usual number of petticoats worn, at least one had to be of the latter material, both for warmth and decency. The advent of the crinoline seriously reduced the number of petticoats, but left the shift and pantaloons intact, only now sometimes the pantaloons did not fasten below the knee like knee-breeches, but were like rather short trousers trimmed with lace. As we have noted in the chapter on the crinoline, these lace-trimmed trousers were usually long enough to be visible whenever the hem of the crinoline-supported skirt swayed upward for a moment. Knitted pantaloons, the ancestors of our modern woollen underwear, were not long in making their appearance, but the essential composition of feminine lingerie remained the same almost till the end of the century, and the first noticeable difference does not occur till the nineties.

Stockings had for many years conserved their original form. They ended just above the knee, and were kept in position by a garter just below the knee; but garters are far from being satisfactory for keeping stockings in position, and in the late seventies advertisements begin to appear of a new device for keeping stockings tightly stretched over the leg—the suspender. It was a stroke of genius to attach suspenders to the bottom edge of the corset, and once this invention had been announced it was destined to form a permanent part of feminine dress. It may be said that with the exception, in the nineteen-twenties, of a few American women

who kept their stockings in position by rolling them over the thigh, the vast majority of women have made use of suspenders ever since their invention.

It is curious to note that the suspender, once invented, took a definite place not only in the history of fashion, but in the history of eroticism, largely owing to the *cancan* dancers in Paris in the middle nineties. Revivals at various times have made the *cancan* dancers too familiar a figure to need much description. The *cancan* dance in its essence was a dance by a woman clothed in long skirts with a multitude of frilly petticoats underneath. In the course of her dance she lifted her skirts and displayed bare thighs traversed by suspenders, which kept the stockings in place. This thigh-eroticism was very prevalent in the nineties, and then suffered a long eclipse until the success of Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel* brought it back once more into vogue. Since then it has been heavily exploited on the lighter stage, in cabarets and music-halls.

The underclothes of the women of the nineties consisted of the old linen shift, a pair of very short linen knickers adorned with ribbon, and over it two or more very frilled skirts; but elegant women soon began to tire of simple linen, and at least one of the petticoats began to be made of silk. This had the advantage not only of adding to the luxury of the ensemble, but of giving a curious swishing noise to all the movements of the wearer, which contemporary observers no doubt found extremely seductive.

Another garment which appeared at the same time was the so-called *cache-corset*, a kind of little linen jacket whose function is sufficiently described by its name. It is needless to remark that the eroticism of suspenders was severely confined to the Parisian *cancan* dancers. In ordinary fashionable seductiveness it had no place. The ordinary woman relied upon the petticoat, which in the late nineties and the first decade of the twentieth century assumed an importance which it had never had before. The fashions of the period, which required a bell-shaped effect in the skirt, left room for innumerable frills and flounces on the under-garment. It became almost a point of honour with fashionable women to be more glorious within than without; to wear, for example, a very

plain tailor-made cloth skirt, and underneath it, glimpsed when the skirt was lifted to cross a street, a wealth of petticoats of extreme fineness and elaboration.

Petticoats have never been more elaborate than during the first decade of the twentieth century, and they often rivalled in richness of material and trimming the costume under which they were worn. Although plain white underskirts were favoured by young women, especially during the summer months, elderly ladies usually preferred brocades, even in warm weather, to fluffy white frills and furbelows. In the most elaborate designs the trimming was all concentrated on the lower half of the petticoat; the top was made perfectly plain and tight-fitting, in order to allow the over-dress to lie over the hips as smoothly as possible. The underskirt was sometimes not provided with a band to encircle the waist at all, but was buttoned round the lower edge of the corset.

A typical model intended for evening use by a girlish wearer was made of pink satin, ornamented by a deep flounce of *écru* Breton net, edged by a full ruching of rose-coloured chiffon. The flounce was further ornamented by pink satin *bébé* ribbon, wandering in and out among the spots of the net without any apparent regularity of design. Another model was of yellow brocade, the lower half trimmed with somewhat deep flounces of black lace, festooned at intervals by the aid of rosettes of yellow ribbon with hanging loops, with a tiny diamond buckle scintillating in the centre of each. One can only wonder what could be the possible use of such elaborate under-garments for a respectable woman. A further petticoat described as more commonplace had a foundation of Oxford blue corded silk, but round the edge was placed a multitude of tiny frills, all blue, but no two of exactly the same tone. Yet another in apple-green silk had a tunic with deep scalloped edges placed over an accordion-pleated flounce. The rounded points of the upper skirt were edged with chiffon ruching in the palest possible shade of pink, and true lovers' knots of a slightly deeper shade of pink ornamented each scallop. Coloured petticoats were extremely popular, the most favoured shade being apple-green.

The lace used on underskirts was nearly always in the form of

insertions, so that it could be mounted on a foundation of silk, making it more reliable as a trimming than if it were sewn to the edge. *Ninon de soie* was largely used for underlinen, and the usual colours were pale pink, pale blue, lavender, green, etc. Breton net was a very usual foundation for camisoles and similar garments, but the material of which they were made was almost entirely hidden by lavish trimming.

The cost of such garments was, of course, enormous, especially as the most luxurious avoided any seam except the most delicately worked. Heavy seams made the *batiste* or silk material lumpy, so that a device was hit on of replacing the seam by narrow lines of extremely fine embroidery *à jour*. All the pieces which composed the garment were united by sewing on to each edge the most minute line of openwork insertion, and the lace which trimmed the *cache-corset*, the chemise, and other articles was fixed on by the same means.

For the special significance of this riot of luxury on undergarments, this orgy of frills and flounces and Valenciennes and Maltese lace, the reader must refer to Chapter VII.

The revolution of feminine dress which Poiret and the Russian Ballet introduced had as its immediate effect a drastic reduction in the number and elaboration of petticoats. Underneath the tight skirt there was simply no room for them. The short, wide skirts of the War period naturally brought back a certain number of petticoats to keep them in position, and underneath them was worn a new kind of so-called skirt-knicker, very full and wide, scalloped and adorned with ribbon, with an elastic band at the waist to keep it in place. But women had grown tired of linen for such garments, and they were now made of taffetas or heavy *crêpe de Chine*. The *cache-corset* still persisted, and was provided with ribbon shoulder-straps, the first appearance of an element in feminine lingerie which has persisted till this day and seems likely to have a long future. Henceforward underwear rarely ascended above the armpits, and was simply kept in place by two ribbons, varying in width but identical in function. Not only was the material of underclothes now more varied than it had been, but the colour also—white having been abandoned in favour of ivory,

Lingerie: 1872, 1916, 1920, 1928


BY SPECIAL APPOINTMENT TO H.M. THE QUEEN.

EDMONDS, ORR, & CO.,

Ladies' and Juvenile Outfitters,
Tailors, and Hosiers,
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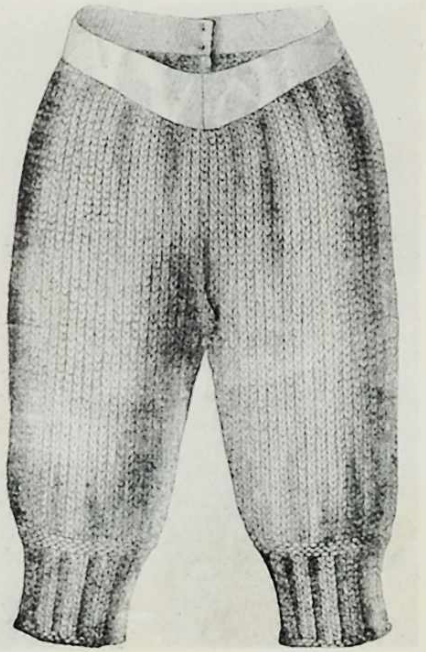
LONDON, W.

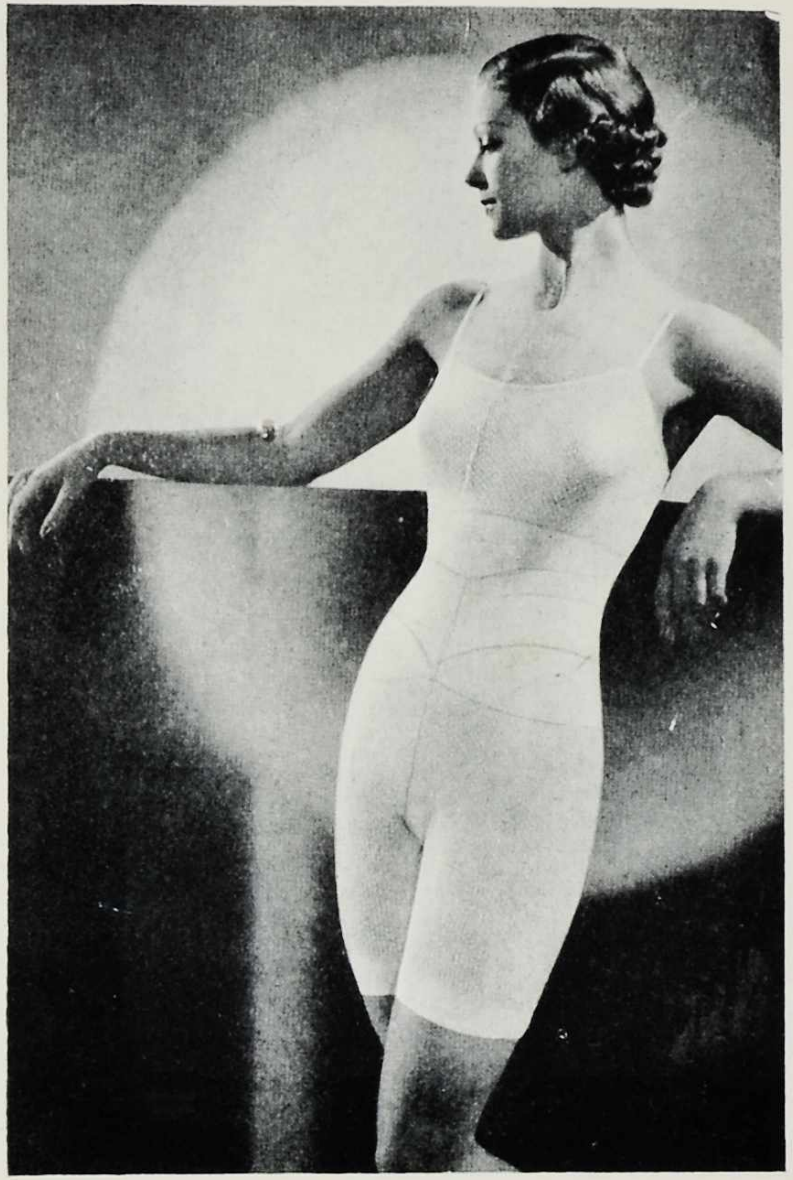
HYGIENIC UNDERWEAR
(PATENTED).

Specialties in Slender Waist Combinations and Undervests. High or Low Necked, Long or Short Sleeves.

These are woven in a thinner texture at the waist where the body is protected by the Corset, thus improving the figure. Manufactured in pure sanitary Wool, Lambs Wool, Natural Wool, Elastic Merino, Silk, and in textures suitable for warm climates. Also Silk Bodices of Woven Cotton, Woollen and silk Stockinette, which fit perfectly to the figure, and Spencer Bodices in White and Natural Wool.

Trousseaux, Layettes, Millinery, &c.
Price-Lists on Application.





Woollen Underclothes: 1888, 1890, 1935

sky-blue, pink, lemon, black, and heliotrope. The War period introduced a new lingerie æsthetic. We should note in passing that for winter the combination had already made its appearance, the old chemise and pantaloons being completely demoded.

In 1920 we may note the appearance of a new item in feminine underwear: cami-knickers—an attempt to combine in one garment the function of drawers and chemise—and for a whole decade this garment reigned supreme. In 1920 it was for a brief period backless, and it was again so in the early thirties. But backless or not, it was in essence a pair of very short silk pantaloons, with a long top extending to above the bust and held in position by shoulder-straps. The materials of which it was made became more and more luxurious, triple *ninon*, *crêpe de Chine*, etc., being quite usual. In 1924 there was a brief vogue for strapless lingerie, the cami-knicker, fashioned in *crêpe de Chine* and trimmed with Nottingham lace, being kept in position by the shape of the body. But the long skirts of 1924 required an additional garment, and in general princess petticoats were worn, almost to the ankle. A favourite material for these was *broché* satin.

The growing shortness of skirts soon rendered such garments unnecessary, and by 1927 they had been generally discarded, although a short princess petticoat was sometimes to be found with a so-called Directoire knicker attachment. The year 1927 was in many ways an age of experiment in underclothes, when various three-in-one garments were produced as well as such inventions as the cami-breecher, with elastic at the knee, and the more ample cami-bocker. The fact that backs had now vanished from evening clothes necessitated a whole new series of special underclothes for evening wear, and the ingenuity of designers was taxed to the utmost to prevent the necessary shoulder-straps from showing. The dips in the back of the skirt this year introduced a very ugly echo in underclothes, which, taken by themselves, look quite ludicrous to a modern eye. It is as if they had been cut by a very incompetent designer who had left them several inches too long at the back.

The longer skirts of 1929 led to the reappearance of the princess slip, which was still, however, much shorter than it had been in

1924. Usually it had what was called a jumper slip and very short knickers to match. One genius produced what he entitled a cami-petticoat, and one a combination chemise and knickers of Indian gauze. By the exigencies of the mode evening underwear continued to be backless. Meanwhile the shrinking of the corset to below the breasts had brought in the necessity for the brassière, which now under various forms began to assume a position of importance in feminine underwear. Some evening dresses made it necessary, if a woman wished to appear neat and show no shoulder-strap, to wear only knickers and a petticoat and above this a brassière, with a specially designed system of straps so that nothing passed across the back above the waist. This system was still unchanged at the outbreak of war, owing to the persistence of the extremely low-backed evening gowns. For day wear, however, the princess petticoat had now become a necessity, and as skirts were wider at the hems the petticoat began to have frills and flounces again, kept very low down so as not to disturb its smoothness over the hips.

Men's underwear is a much simpler story; the traditional and, indeed, ancestral shirt is still the main garment worn by men under their ordinary clothes, and, almost up to the end of the nineteenth century, when a man wished to be warmer in winter he simply wore two shirts. The phrase (to wear two shirts) is still used in the remoter country places to designate a change into winter underwear, but the discovery of the possibilities of machine-knitted wool brought in for most men the vogue of underwear as we know it. This in general, consisted of a vest and of pants, at first long, reaching to the ankle, and still so occasionally worn. But within recent years—say, since 1927—it has become obvious to most men that wool to the ankles is not really necessary, even in the coldest weather which England gives. Pants have accordingly become shorter, and for most young men, at least, now finish above the knee. They are still somewhat clumsy in design, requiring as a rule to be kept in position by a system of loops through which the braces pass before being fastened to the buttons on the trousers. What reform has come about has largely been through American fashion, and a determined effort has been made by American

designers during the last few years to revolutionize men's underwear, and to bring it into line with the developments which have been effected in the feminine world. The perusal of the advertisement columns of any American paper for men—such as *Esquire*—is sufficient to show the importance which is now given to male undergarments in the United States, and the improvements which have already been effected in them by the use of various semi-elastic yarns. An attempt has been made to incorporate into male garments some of the qualities of the feminine corset. There is no question of boning, but merely of support for the abdomen. The normal American underwear outfit for men now consists of two garments: very short 'shorts'—rather like a bathing costume, but with the stiffening mentioned above—and vests, which, unlike the English vests, have no sleeves, and are sufficiently wide at the neck to be drawn over the head and need no buttons in the front. It can hardly be doubted that modern American men's underwear will make many converts. It is not only more comfortable and more hygienic, but—miracle of miracles!—it is even æsthetic. The modern young American, stripped of his outer garments, has yet a certain manliness and dignity, perhaps more than before. The more conservative Englishman in a similar situation is grotesque; but it is interesting to reflect that the spread of American male underwear is reintroducing what is, in effect, a corset for men.

Chapter XIII

THE THEORY OF DÉCOLLETAGE

THE history of décolletage is a curious one, and the mode has had such varying influences upon fashion ever since the fifteenth century that it is worth some special study. The idea that on occasions of especial formality or solemnity it was the right and proper thing for women to expose their throats and a portion of their bosoms is at first sight somewhat difficult to explain. The precise reverse might seem to be the natural condition of affairs, and in primitive societies this is still true. The women of Bali, for example, who go about their daily tasks stripped to the waist, cover their breasts upon ceremonial occasions such as temple visits, feasts, or sacred dances. The natural tendency in early civilization is for a woman to put on more clothes when she wishes to appear at her best, and this is in accordance with the theory that clothes were originally a decoration and not assumed for purposes of modesty.

In ancient Egypt the amount of nudity seems to have varied immensely with social position. Female slaves and women of the lower classes frequently went about without any clothes at all other than a loose girdle resting on the hips. Even the princesses however, of the house of Pharaoh were décolleté, often by modern, standards startlingly so, seeing that their dresses started below the breasts. On the other hand, they often wore deep collars of beads which almost served the purpose of a bodice. Something like modern décolletage is seen in the costume of Mycenæ, except that here too the breasts were exposed.

The simple dresses of ancient Greece imposed a certain amount of décolletage by their very form, but there is no evidence that this was used consciously for the enhancement of beauty. At later Greek and Roman feasts the female dancers appeared nude, and the female convives appear not to have been much more amply clothed, but it is a long step from the Roman orgy to the nine-

teenth-century dinner party or even to the twentieth-century *cabaret* performance.

Throughout the Middle Ages décolletage seems to have been almost unknown, but it began again in the fifteenth century, and reached its extreme at that Burgundian Court, which was perhaps the first centre of exportable fashion, the first triumph of the spirit of the age over regional costume. The sixteenth century showed comparatively little décolletage—at least in France and England, where the immense development of the ruff was hostile to it. There was, however, a good deal in Italy, as can be seen from the Venetian painters' works of the middle of the century.

The discovery, at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, that the ruff need not necessarily encircle the throat entirely, but could be pushed back behind the head to form the so-called Medici collar, gave a strong impulse to décolletage. The corsets of the period pushed the breasts upward, and the square-cut gowns then worn often exposed them almost to the nipple. At the end of the century they even sometimes went farther, as they were to do again for a very brief period at the end of the eighteenth.

At the beginning of the eighteenth the form of décolletage seemed to have set firm for a century. There was no exposure of the shoulders, none of the back, but the front of the bodice had a fairly low, square-cut décolletage which was not necessarily worn only in the evening, the distinction between evening and day dresses being nothing like so rigorous as it has since become. All eighteenth-century dresses had sleeves reaching to the elbow, and the exposure of the upper part of the arm would inevitably have been considered indecent.

The first effect of the French Revolution at the beginning of the period which forms the subject-matter of this book was to make décolletage almost universal, both in day and evening clothes. Greek women had not concealed their throats, and therefore there was no reason why emancipated Frenchwomen should do so either. The sleeve, however, although it had grown into no more than a slight puff on the shoulders, was still universal, although the square décolletage was sometimes so wide that it is difficult to see

how the sleeves were kept in position, and they must in fact have been constantly slipping off the shoulder. The décolletage at the back of the dress was generally less than at the front; certainly never greater, that being an eccentricity reserved for the last few years of contemporary fashion.

The prudery following the restoration of the Bourbons tended to abolish décolletage in day dresses, but it was powerless to do so in evening dresses. Here it had to content itself with reintroducing the high-backed Medici collar, divided in two and placed on the shoulders like two lace hedges. These are described in contemporary notes as "imperial wings elevated." Part of the area exposed was, however, sometimes filled in with gauze, although whether this really contributed to the modesty of a woman's appearance may well be doubted. Gérard's picture of Comtesse Regnault de Saint-Jean shows her wearing a transparent dark net with oval décolletage over a very low, square-cut gown. The effect is extremely seductive.

In the early eighteen-twenties décolletage was not so low, but by the end of the decade the sinking of sleeves off the shoulders made it possible to expose the top of the arms. Décolletage became almost straight across, with a slight depression in the centre between the breasts, and this mode continued with only minor alterations till the end of the sixties.

Even the prudish forties adopted the straight-across décolletage. Indeed, it is in this period that it reaches its most characteristic expression, and to emphasize the effect it banished every kind of neck ornament and cultivated an extremely sloping shoulder-line. It was as if the whole dress had slipped downward, and was only arrested where it stayed by some kind of miracle which might at any moment cease to function. "Goodness, child," cries the old lady in *Punch*, "your clothes are falling off!" "Nonsense, aunt," replies the young lady, about to go out to a party, "it's the fashion." And a very attractive fashion it was. The introduction of the deep Bertha emphasized the impression of something very precious emerging from a complicated wrapping, as a flower emerges from the paper which encloses its stalk. Not since the fifteenth century had such an effect been aimed at and achieved.

It is interesting to note that during the forties wedding dresses were frequently décolleté also, and to the same degree as evening dresses—a relic of the notion that on any ceremonial occasion women should bare their throats. The notion had reached perhaps its most striking development at the Court of Louis XIV, when Court ladies were expected to attend Mass in low-cut gowns. This rule, the very reverse of later practice, was so strictly enforced that the King himself compelled ladies to retire from church if they were wearing high gowns, even, we are informed, although they were old and shrivelled and had no wish to be décolleté. Louis obviously considered that a décolleté gown was a mark of respect not only to himself, but to the Deity; of this notion the mid-nineteenth-century wedding dress was the only survival.

In the eighteen-fifties décolletage was slightly higher and worn with longer sleeves, but in the sixties these grew shorter again.

In the early sixties, it is interesting to note, there was less décolletage in good families in France than in England. The high dress was worn at dinner parties even of a formal kind. The custom was afterwards introduced into England, but never became general, and a writer of the period, while admitting that a low dress was by far the most becoming, remarks:

> Yet I should restrict this to dinners by candlelight. In summer a thin high dress, at any rate, is more convenient and more modest, since there is something in exposing the bare shoulders and arms in the glare of day that startles an observer. The *demi-toilette* of the French may here be well applied.

The early seventies introduced a completely new mode. The straight-across décolletage was entirely abandoned; evening dresses at the back reached the nape of the neck, and in front there was nothing but a narrow V-shaped slit. This fashion was modified in the eighties by the introduction of a square-cut décolletage. A very seductive French mode consisted of a kind of double décolletage, a band of material passing across the upper part of the bosom with a gap below it. But this device never made much headway in England.

Throughout the nineties there was a fashion for the evening blouse, which was only part of the general enthusiasm for blouses of

all kinds, but the blouse for the evening is hostile to much décolletage, as by its nature it is almost compelled to have sleeves of a sort. The emphasis on sleeves throughout the nineties worked in the same direction. In 1890 they were little puffed sleeves arising sharply from the shoulders. In the middle nineties they were immense wide sleeves, rather like the sleeves of 1830 and 1833, and with such sleeves it is almost impossible to bare the top of the arm. Those, however, who wore the alternative solid *corsage* were able to have it cut very low, and it was sometimes kept in position over the bust by means of a horizontal pleating similar to that which prevailed in 1840. In general the décolletage of the nineties was square in form, with frills of lace below. The frills continued and exaggerated the form of the wide puffed sleeve. Gloves, of course, were universally worn, although it was the fashion to leave a small gap of two or three inches between the top of the glove and the bottom of the sleeve. Sometimes the high dog-collar of pearls or other stones was adopted, especially by older women, who wished at one and the same time to display the firmness of the bosom and conceal the hollows of the neck.

In the late nineties big sleeves had disappeared, and this enabled the tops of the shoulders to be shown once more. A typical ball dress of 1899 shows a straight-across décolletage with pleating over the top of the bust, kept in position by thin shoulder-straps, leaving the top of the arm bare. The top of the sleeves begins at the same level as the top of the *corsage*, and the sleeves continue downward to the wrist. Except for the shoulder-straps, the effect gained was somewhat similar to that of the eighteen-forties, the top of the body emerging, as it were, from a complicated wrapping. Dinner dresses, however, as opposed to ball dresses, continued to have sleeves, although they were very small, and were often little more than a frill at the edge of the shoulder.

At the turn of the century there was much use of net of various kinds, generally in the form of a very wide trellis. When the top of the sleeve was composed of this net, and the top of the *corsage* also—the latter, however, being lined with flesh-coloured material—the effect must have been seductive in the extreme. One ball dress of 1900 shows a sleeve coming well over the shoulder and

enclosing the whole of the arm in wide-meshed netting. The difficulty of this mode seems to have been to keep the top of the sleeve in place, as in the fashion plate at least it has no visible means of support. Dog-collars continued to be worn, sometimes with jewels, sometimes simply of black velvet.

The loop-over blouse effect of all dresses in the early years of the twentieth century is reflected in the similar looseness of the sleeves, which, however, are sometimes transparent and nearly always leave the shoulders bare. At the back dresses did not descend very low, being merely cut away in a shallow V. The jewelled dog-collar already mentioned became about 1904 extremely complicated, being elaborated into a complete *parure*, consisting of dog-collar and pendant, jewelled shoulder-strap, and three jewel clasps—one in the centre and one at each side of the *corsage*—connected with one another by strings of pearl. The habit of leaving the tops of the arms bare is discontinued about 1905. Sleeves cover almost the whole of the upper arm, and for dinner dresses, especially for the so-called 'home dinner gown,' women contented themselves with an extremely moderate décolletage, consisting of a V some four or five inches in depth and three or four inches wide. In general, however, décolletage was much deeper, although it preserved the V-shape, except in the revived Empire style, when it was of necessity squarer. From 1906 to 1909 square and round décolletage alternates.

The revolution in dress which we have discussed in the chapter on Paul Poiret freed the bust, and gave rise to a system of soft draping in place of the solid *corsage* of former years. The general effect was of a *fichu*, which might be more or less transparent, folded over the shoulders, and as the bust was no longer thrust up and forward the æsthetic of décolletage changed completely. The year 1916 witnessed an innovation: evening bodices were cut straight across in front and held in position by simple shoulder-straps, leaving the arms completely bare. At the back the décolletage was very deep indeed; in fact, almost as deep as it became in the early nineteen-thirties, and it became a stock joke in the comic papers that women, in their zeal for economy, had not hesitated to sacrifice the backs of their evening gowns. The

song "We are glad to see you're back, dear lady," was sung with great applause on the music-hall stage, and as the singer was Miss Teddie Gerrard, the male portion of her audience at least was compelled to agree. Most women, however, threw over this deep décolletage some kind of flimsy scarf, and the scarf was sometimes incorporated into the dress, as a kind of over-dress. In the words of an advertisement of 1919 describing "a simple and distinctive evening or dinner frock in all colours," "the lace and georgette Empire under-frock appears under a cloud effect with two collarettes finished with tassels." The same advertiser drew the attention of the public to a sequel to this "cloud wrap" in which "the smart evening and dinner gown is combined with a charmingly draped tea-gown effect. By fastening the points of the 'cascade' at the shoulders the arms are uncovered, and the drapery can be secured close to the figure by the tassels' ends." Most women, however, wore a very moderate décolletage front and back. The front décolletage of this period is invariably square. Décolletage was extremely moderate in the early twenties, especially in 1924, when it was reduced to a mere boat-shaped depression, front and back. Sometimes the dress ran straight across from the top of the shoulders, giving hardly any décolletage at all.

As the twenties progressed skirts got shorter and shorter, and by 1925 evening dress was a mere tube reaching to the knee, exposing a considerable area of leg, but very little of the rest of the body. The arms, of course, were bare. It was natural, perhaps, that the period which had abolished the bust altogether should pay little attention to décolletage. The top of the body, in fact, was completely neglected, all the attention being concentrated upon the lower limbs.

However, with the return of the first tentative longer skirts in 1928—skirts which sagged at the back or were furnished with long trailing draperies at the side—the back décolletage began to grow deeper, the front one remaining very much the same. Thus began that extraordinary evolution of evening dresses which has lasted to the present time. At first the back décolletage was no more than a modest V reaching one-third of the way down the back. In 1929, however, it began to reach half-way down, in 1930 three-quarters,

and in 1931 the back was sometimes bared to the waist. As this very odd fashion went with a tight swathing of the dress round the hips, the whole interest of evening gowns was shifted to the back, a point of view never before so frankly accepted in the whole history of fashion.

Soon a mere cutting out of the back of the bodice was not considered sufficient. The whole of the back of the dress was dispensed with, the material curving round the body five or six inches under the arm to cover the bust in front. At first shoulder-straps were provided, and these have persisted on some models until to-day. They were longer than any shoulder-straps had ever been before, and the difficulty of keeping them in position led some women to abolish them altogether. As a substitute the front of the dress was fastened to a kind of necklace passing round the back of the neck. Sometimes even this was dispensed with, and the front of the bodice kept in position by the mere tightness of its make. A woman sitting in the stalls of a theatre presented from behind an impression of complete nudity, although at the front the bodice came quite high. This sometimes had quite ludicrous results. It was possible, for example, to see a woman leaving the theatre, wearing over her shoulders one of the fashionable pelerine fur coats which left a good four or five inches of bare back between its bottom edge and the top of the dress—a sure method, one would have thought, of contracting a fatal chill; but when have women cared for such trifles!

As the thirties progressed this extreme mode, although it persisted to the outbreak of war, was often replaced by one more complicated, in which portions of the back of the dress were left intact and other portions removed. Holes were cut in the backs of dresses, sometimes round, but more generally triangular, and it was possible to have an ordinary shallow V-décolletage at the back and beneath it, separated from it by two or three inches of material, another décolletage reaching down to the waistline. Perhaps such a device should not be called décolletage at all, but it is difficult to see what new word should be coined for it.

Dressmakers set out to produce a fashion for backs of dresses which should be, in the cant phrase of the day, 'amusing.' An

advertiser of 1933 sums up the situation with admirable clarity when he bids his readers: "Turn your backs to be in the fashion, for an amusing décolletage is often the focal point of interest in an evening gown." Although it is dangerous to prophesy, it is probable that these eccentricities are now over. The form of modern corsets shows a definite revival of interest in the bust, and once this has established itself backs are likely to be covered once more and dresses to be cut low in the front in the traditional manner. It will then be no longer necessary to "turn your backs to be in the fashion."

The subject we have been discussing, however, is not merely a matter of erotic appeal, although that, to any serious student of fashion, makes it sufficiently important: the importance of evening dress lies in the fact that it is an exaggeration of the dominant tendencies of the day in women's fashion. Having, as it were, an element of fantasy, it is more easily modified by any outside influence, and as it is the garb in which women look, or fancy that they look, their best, it reflects their innermost thoughts and tendencies more closely than day dress, which has, of necessity, an element of practicability.

Evening dress has had in recent years an odd connexion with sports clothes, particularly with bathing dresses, for it is hard to deny, for example, that the backlessness of evening dresses in the early thirties was inspired by sun-bathing outfits. Although it is influenced by sport, it is by its nature hostile to certain of its manifestations. It was, for example, the first kind of dress to lead the return to longer skirts. An evening dress should be long, and will always be so, except when the tendency to short dresses is so overwhelming that it cannot be resisted. It is a dress which requires grace and a certain amount of dignity, and as it is essentially a dress in which women can move slowly, sit a good deal, and are not required to put forward any great exertion, except perhaps in dancing, long trailing skirts are more suitable to evening dress than anything else. Then, too, when skirts were excessively short, décolletage, as we have seen, was neglected, and décolletage is the essence of evening dress; it always has been, and it probably always will be. Perhaps this seems a bold statement, and yet it is

probable that, short of a Communist revolution, women's evening dress will continue to be worn for very many years to come; for while men's evening dress may or may not be obsolescent, the spread of democracy seems merely to have increased the number of women who wear some sort of evening dress. Before the war in the cheapest dance-hall in the suburbs the men might be wearing lounge suits or tennis flannels, but at least a considerable proportion of young women were décolleté, for décolletage is a powerful weapon of attractiveness that is never likely to be cast out entirely from the feminine armoury.

Chapter XIV

COLOURS AND MATERIALS

We have seen the effect upon the shape and form of dresses of the classical enthusiasm which prevailed after the French Revolution. Even more striking was the effect upon colour and material: the heavy, richly embroidered stuffs of the eighteenth century were entirely put aside, and the whole world of women contented itself with simple dresses of white muslin, in an endeavour to look as much like antique statues as possible. In retrospect the prevalence of white was something extraordinary; not only in the ballroom and at dinner, but in the street, the same simple, light white dresses were worn. It was as if women had adopted a uniform, and although the forms of dresses soon began to change, their whiteness remained unimpaired until well on into the nineteenth century.

The passion for white was even more universal than a study of the fashion plates of the period might lead one to suppose, for what the fashion plates show are frequently over-dresses; in particular, the pelisse—a long over-dress complete with sleeves and bodice, buttoning down the front and reaching to the ankles. This was frequently coloured, but even here the colours were pale and unobtrusive. After a while, however, similar colours began to find their way into the dresses themselves, and as early as 1808 we find, for example, a pale pink dress with pink velvet trimming. Further investigation, however, reveals the fact that this pale pink dress was of coloured net over a white slip. Sometimes white *crêpe* was worn over white satin. Sometimes a white satin opera cloak was trimmed with pale lemon-coloured fur. Occasionally the satin itself was shot with amber or brown, and worn over a slip of sarsenet with a drapery of white lace. A typical opera dress was of simple white muslin, with white satin trimming, and over it was worn an Indian ruby mantle edged with gold.

The same conditions apply a few years later. In 1812, for

example, we find a pelisse of lilac figured sarsenet, but for the evening it was still usual to wear white figured satin trimmed with white *crêpe* and chenille. For morning dresses people began to tire of the prevalence of white muslin, and we find such dresses made of pale ruby merino cloth. About this time it became the fashion to wear evening dresses short enough to show the lace petticoat underneath. Both, however, were still white.

In 1816 there were attempts to bring in a greater variety of colour, and we find evening frocks of amber *crêpe* over white satin with blue trimmings. A little later it became the custom to wear dark chintzes for informal dresses; but by 1824 light colours even for these once more prevailed, a favourite morning dress being made of light murrey-coloured (a kind of crushed strawberry) sarsenet, with *rouleaux* of the same-coloured satin. Dark blue cloth pelisses were trimmed with sable, and a commentator of 1824 remarks that

> bright sarsenets, of some modest and unobtruding colour, have succeeded to the dark chintzes for morning and home *déshabillé*: poplins of a bright geranium and other striking colours are much admired in half-dress. Evening dresses are very often of white muslin gauze over white satin or *gros de Naples*.

So far, as we have seen, there has been extraordinarily little variety in the materials chosen, satin and net being the obvious favourites.

Considerable variety had crept in by the end of the eighteen-twenties, and whereas before dresses had in general been of white, with coloured trimmings at most, now the dresses themselves were coloured and the trimmings were white. An evening dress of 1830 was of pink satin with diagonal flounces of rich white blond lace. A cloak of European cashmere, in imitation of Indian cashmere, was embroidered with floize silk. Opera dress was made of chamois-coloured *gaze de Smyrne*. A typical ball dress was of rose-coloured gauze over *gros de Naples*; but a dinner dress, breaking away from these modest attempts at colour, was of crimson *gros de la Chine*. A favourite colour for dresses of the same material was violet, or *gris lavande*—both what would nowadays be called 'pastel' shades. Until the middle thirties the strongest colours

were to be seen in dinner dresses, ball and opera gowns remaining pale, lemon-coloured *crêpe* over satin, and the like. Carriage dresses were of fawn or aventurine over white cambric.

Even in 1836 a social chronicler could remark, while describing a particularly grand ball in Paris, that "white dresses were, as usual, most numerous, but there were many pink, and some beautiful pale blue." Lemon-coloured tulle dresses became popular about this period. There was a passion for brocaded gauze, or brocaded tulle, or figured satin, with quillings of tulle and blond lace. Other materials, such as Indian reps, began to creep in for day dresses. There were even curiosities such as dresses of cashmere embroidered with worsted. Tuckings of muslin were sometimes used as a decoration on silk dresses.

Even in the early forties the popularity of muslin remained unabated, the favourite materials for a full *toilette* being white tulle tarlatan, organdie, or Indian muslin. The *toilette d'intérieur* could be made of fine cambric or Indian muslin, with *passementerie* decoration, while we are told that "the favourite materials for the *toilette champêtre* are shot taffetas, Barèges, striped Pekins, and muslins."

Taffetas, silks, and poplins are very typical of the early fifties, especially in such colours as grey, *gros-bleu*, and *gros-vert*, shot with black. Much black was worn at this period. We find in 1852 dresses of black satin, black velvet dresses for walking, and much use of black lace, sometimes over white taffetas. A favourite colour for taffetas *d'Italie* was sky-blue. Reds were popular for day dresses, which were often of maroon embroidered with another colour, such as blue. Satin dresses of bottle-green were worn, and for balls white satin still held the field, although for the *demi-toilette* it was permissible to wear satin *gris-perle*. The favourite materials were undoubtedly satin, velvet, and *moiré-antique*, but white *piqué* was employed for the *veste-pardessus*, and Scotch cashmere of a tartan pattern made its way even in France—one of the rare instances in which Queen Victoria may be said to have influenced the mode. White cashmere was much worn in the middle fifties for *robes de chambres*, but the popularity of taffetas continued. The favourite colours were bottle-green, pale purple, and dull

brown, although it was usual to trim all these with some violently contrasting colour such as Prussian blue. The *manteaux* worn over such dresses were usually of black velvet. A favourite material for light country dresses was pink *mousseline de Chine*. The same conditions continued till the end of the fifties, strong colours being kept for trimmings, the main dress being violet, brown, or earth-coloured Scotch taffetas, for such materials were not always coloured like a plaid.

The sombreness of women's attire during this period may be accounted for by the multitude of overmantles, Zouave jackets and the like, which were frequently of black *glacé*. There was much wearing also of black cashmere shawls. One typical promenade dress, however, shows an underskirt of white muslin, with a tunic of mauve *glacé*. The favourite colours in the early sixties were green, mauve, biscuit, black, and pink.

In 1864 the *polonaise* was popular, a long over-garment fitting the waist behind as closely as a military jacket. The usual material was black silk. Dresses could be of violet silk, with gimp trimmings in some contrasting colour. Underneath the *polonaise* the usual colours visible were emerald-green, violet, and dull red. We find, however, a growing taste for checks, and a typical dress of this period was of check reps trimmed with scarlet gimp. Morning dresses were sometimes of black alpaca—a material which was just entering upon its long career of popularity—trimmed with green silk. In the same year, 1864, we note a ball dress of magenta silk, trimmed with cuffs of white tulle or tarlatan. Magenta was the colour *par excellence* at the height of the popularity of the Second Empire.

The disasters which France suffered in 1870 and 1871 threw the whole of the mode into mourning, for during these two years dark colours and simple materials were worn all over Europe. Sombre violet was a typical colour for walking costume, the material being *poult de soie*. We find also dark red poplin trimmed with black velvet, or green poplin trimmed with satin. For summer, however, there was a new fashion for twilled foulards, especially if they were striped, and another popular material was mauve mohair. For walking dresses dark mauve poplins, maroon poplins, or light grey

poplins trimmed with green silk were usual, rivalled, however, by twilled foulards of the newly invented colour, Havannah. This was a light brown, rather like the colour of an unrolled tobacco leaf. Jackets of all kinds were in general of black velvet or black satin.

Black continued to be popular for mantlets and similar garments until the middle seventies. They were made of cashmere or of taffetas, or sometimes of black tulle, heavily beaded. Velvet was again much worn. The striking characteristic of the middle seventies was the fashion for mingling two materials in the same dress, usually of contrasting colours. We find garments of pale blue foulards and grey mohair, or grey *glacé* mohair and steel-blue taffetas. We find mixtures of *écru* and toile. There was a passion for stripes, a dress of white and maroon striped *coutil* being typical. Sometimes tunics of striped and figured materials were worn upon coloured silk dresses of a contrasting shade. Colours in general at this period were rather violent, and there was so much trimming on dresses that it is sometimes difficult to tell which was the foundation and which the ornamentation.

The same tendency continued into the late seventies. We find costumes in foulards with black and check stripes alternately, or a combination of Chester brown taffetas and dove-coloured *chiné*. A favourite new material was surah, and another was *faille*. We find a visiting *toilette* of 1876 in prune-blue *faille* and prune and cream striped surah. Green *faille* dresses were sometimes adorned with violently contrasting red trimmings of the same material Nankin foulards of biscuit colour were trimmed with maroon *faille*. There was also a fashion for striped silken linen : in fact, there was no end to the new materials which were introduced about this period. A contemporary commentator gives a list of some of the most striking :

> *Drap des Vosges*, downy on the inside, in plain colours and stripes; fancy woollen tissues in camaïeu patterns; *granite d'hiver*, a speckled woollen fabric, in all new shades of colour; *drap sibérien*, beige, Cheviot, and the new ribbed *diagonale*—all excellent tissues for both walking and home dresses. . . . Woollen materials with a plain ground of dark blue or green, grey, or the many shades of brown in

vogue just now, are speckled all over with crimson, as if red powder had been thrown all over them. Others are powdered over in the same way with gold or silver or ivory white.

The manufacturers had apparently discovered how to make a great variety of woven patterns, and in their weaving they loved to blend two materials together, such as silk and wool.

The cut of dresses continued to be extremely elaborate in the early eighties, but colours were on the whole lighter and less insistent. We find sky-blue satin dinner dresses in 1881, and day dresses of light lilac silk rep. A typical evening *toilette* of the time was made of cardinal red satin, with white satin trimmings; another was blended of dahlia-coloured satin and velvet of the same shade. Plush was much used for evening dresses of this period, generally in pale pink or some similar shade, and blended inevitably with satin. The popularity of surah continued, and also the light brown colour, which was now known as Spanish tobacco. We find purple surah used as a trimming on a dress of steel satin and white lace. Other popular colours were myrtle green, bronze green, and sulphur yellow. Satin and gauze still held their place as essential weapons in the dressmakers' armoury. In the middle eighties there was a rage for black and white stripes, and also for ostrich-plumed trimming. Cream cashmere was much seen in race dresses. Brown and scarlet were also popular, and there was at this period a curious fashion for red stockings.

In 1901 velveteens were extremely popular, partly because of their great capacity for receiving a variety of dyes and for their softness in draping, which made them suitable, above all, for tea-gowns and indoor dresses, especially in the colder part of the year. A commentator of the period goes into ecstasies over the variety of colours of which velveteens were capable:

> In greens there are lily-leaf and willow-greens, and emerald, and sea, and Nile, and bronze, each exquisite, and running through the gamut of shades. The reds are not less various: the tulip, the geranium, the poppy, the ugly-named but effective *sang-de-bœuf*, the ruby, the copper, the old rose—these and a dozen other shades ranging from almost pink to the neighbourhood of brown. Out of such variety who could not be pleased?

Another popular material was black *glacé*, which lent itself to the moulded forms of the dresses, and was considered very smart, especially when trimmed with little straps of black velvet or with gold buckles.

Serge was a very popular material in the early years of the century, and when dyed a navy colour was unapproachable for utility and neatness of effect. For the country cream serge was considered a general utility material, and in town the same material was worn in greys, and fawns, and pale blues, and pinks. Its main advantage was that it was solid enough for the tailor-made and yet sufficiently light for comfort. For the Riviera, however, it was obviously too hot, and women adopted instead a dark shantung, an alpaca or a tussore, or taffetas. American travellers strongly favoured the last named, as it was at once light, dust-proof, and smart. Englishwomen, however, found that it did not wear sufficiently well.

In the year 1908 there were two revivals of old, almost forgotten fabrics. One was a ribbed silk with a glossy surface, called, as it had been called a generation before, Ottoman silk. It was used both for dresses and Calcutta hat shapes. The other material was *faille*, which was much used for visiting dresses, chiefly because of its clinging qualities, a new vogue for tightness having just arrived. Stiff brocades or firm *glacé* taffetas would not drape into the full, softly falling folds, and softer fabrics had to be used. This led also to a revival of satin cloth, woven exceedingly fine and subtle. Several varieties were produced, with a woollen admixture, so as to give durability. The new clinging gowns were often draped over with a semi-transparent material, the most typical being *crêpe de Chine*, the varieties of which were given many names, such as *ninon de soie*, meteor, *charmeuse*, *mousseline*, and others; but such luxuries, it is needless to remark, were only for the wealthy.

In the autumn of 1901 the end of mourning and half-mourning for Queen Victoria was marked by a violent reaction from greys and mauves to an immense variety of red colouring: red, in fact, was the colour of the hour, and ranged from wine-red shades to crimson and purple tones. This led to an increased use of velvet, which always looks particularly well in darker red shades—

FRONT AND BACK EROTIC-ÆSTHETIC: 1900, 1931

FURS: 1887, 1903

although for tea-gowns and other informal costumes velveteen was very popular. For reception dresses real velvet was required. A fashion writer of 1901 recommends a visiting gown in rich red velvet, toned down with a *fichu* of yellowed old lace, or with a front of embroidered chiffon, or a vest of cream *mousseline de soie*, laid over a pale yellow silk foundation. Other colours were sometimes rather daringly combined with red, blue revers or a blue belt being quite common. Walking dresses were very largely made of red combined with gold and blue; white was intermixed with the red also, and black in the form of black velvet straps. A favourite garment at the beginning of the century was the *boléro*, which, when made, as it often was, in red cloth, must have looked very much like a guardsman's mess-jacket.

In 1903 there was a revived fashion for wearing white in the evening. White dresses made of tulle, *lisse*, or *mousseline de soie*, with sparkling sequins, clusters of tiny flowers, or puffings of chiffon, were the favourite wear. Pale blue and pink were also popular, and the white of bodices was frequently relieved by threading pale green satin ribbon in and out of the folds of the tulle. White silk dresses had a narrow pale green stripe. The *boléro* was frequently of green velvet, and there was a fashion for decorating it with coffee-coloured *guipure* lace. The year 1903 was the year of pastel shades.

Mauve was Queen Alexandra's favourite colour, and she was said to look well in every shade of it, from the palest lilac to the darkest purple. In summer she used to wear pale heliotrope *crêpe*, and in winter a costume of violet velvet with toque to match.

We have already mentioned Poiret's influence on the forms of dresses. His influence on colours was not less remarkable. He claimed, with some show of truth, that when he began to do what he wanted in dress-designing there were absolutely no tints left on the palette of the colourist. Taste for the refinements of the eighteenth century had led all women into a sort of deliquescence, and, on the pretence of being distinguished, all vitality had been suppressed. *Nuances* of 'nymph's thigh,' lilacs, swooning mauves, tender blue hortensias, Niles, maizes, straws—all that was soft, washed-out, and insipid, was held in honour. Cried Poiret:

> Into this sheep-cote I threw a few rough wolves: reds, greens, violets, royal blues that made all the rest sing aloud. I had to wake up the good people of Lyons, whose stomach is a bit heavy, and put a little gaiety, a little new freshness, into the colour-scheme. There were orange and lemon *crêpes de Chine* which they would not have dared to imagine. On the other hand, the morbid mauves were hunted out of existence.[1]

The influence of the Russian Ballet, it need hardly be said, was all in the same direction, and the years immediately preceding the War witnessed a riot of colour in feminine costume such as had not been seen since the seventies, but which, in our eyes at least, was in much better taste.

The First World War had a sobering effect on colours, and the prevailing hue of khaki also no doubt worked in the same direction, leading women to confine themselves for the most part to golden browns, dull yellows, and beige. A typical evening dress of the period was described as being made in golden-brown buff satin, opening over a panel of apricot *crêpe de Chine*. The influence of the French uniform of horizon blue is perhaps to be seen in "a filmy tea-gown of diaphanous blue Bengaline veiled in *ninon*." We read, however, of *cerise* chiffon velvet for evening cloaks, and velvet was undoubtedly much used during this period. A commentator in 1915, indeed, calls it "undeniably the age of velvet," but it would perhaps be truer to call it the age of velveteen.

As the War progressed colours became a little less sombre, partly, perhaps, because so many women were now in uniform. We hear of smocks for work on the land, "yellow, patterned with a brilliant assortment of futurist colours," a phrase which presumably meant any bright colours arranged in unnaturalistic shapes. There was an outbreak of awning stripes on dresses—broad black stripes on a white, mauve, pink, or blue ground. Striped voiles were very popular for the new jumper frocks. It is interesting to compare this outbreak of stripes with a similar outbreak during the period of the upheaval of the Directoire. There was a growing use of the material called georgette, and the most

[1] *My First Fifty Years.*

popular colours, according to the autumn announcement of *The Drapers' Organizer*, were delphinium blue, Zulu brown, and Nivelle red. There was also a return to blue serge. For "the typical Englishwoman there is no material so becoming as navy blue serge, and nothing but the impossibility of getting it will ever drive it completely out of fashion." Fashion commentators are rarely possessed of the gift of prophecy.

The end of the War brought with it a dancing craze, and the dance frocks of the period were brilliant in colour, the most popular being made of gold and silver shot tissues. For day dresses colours tended towards the rich and sombre. Among the materials for day dresses stockinette was beginning its long reign.

The vogue for violent colours, even for evening dresses, did not last, and the twenties settled down into a very restrained palette, the favourite colour schemes being brown and grey, or silver and rose-pink, although we find mention of gowns of hyacinth-blue *crêpe de Chine* or rust-red *charmeuse*. For day dresses there was much use of silks and gaberdine. Cloaks were made of brushed wool in wide checkerboard and other geometrical designs.

In 1923 the vogue was still for "honey, light tortoise-shell, and the whole gamut of grey *naunces*." Marocain and *crêpe de Chine* were popular materials for simple frocks. We have already mentioned the vogue of stockinette: in the middle twenties knitted suits were much worn, and the same dress often combined wool, leather, and silk. Black satin sometimes appeared for evening wear, and there was considerable use of printed chiffon. Towards the end of 1925 the demand for printed materials assumed the proportions of a craze. There were afternoon dresses of printed muslin in every colour. Evening dresses were sometimes printed or painted by hand. There was a brief vogue for Batik, especially for scarves. Early in 1926, however, there was a violent reaction against printed or pattern materials of all kinds, and a return to self-coloured materials. Black became a favourite colour for evening wear, and many dinner dresses were made of black lace. For day wear there was considerable use, even in Paris, of heavy English stuff—tweeds and the like—and grey-blue Kasha.

In the early thirties so many new tendencies are obvious, and

the multiplicity of materials becomes so overwhelming, that the task of the commentator is frankly an impossible one.

In colour the fantasy of individual designers now played a larger rôle than ever before, as when, for example, in 1930 Patou introduced his new colour, *rose opaline*. "*Garni de renard gris, associé au noir ou au bleu marin, le rose opaline prend toute sa valeur et est très seyant aux visages.*" For a time *rose opaline* was the rage, but was quickly succeeded by other shades. The favourite colours for evening were white, pastel-blue, pearl-grey, *cerise*, and the chief materials georgette, flowered taffetas, *moirés*, satins, and subtle *lamés*. There was much black and white for afternoon, with hand embroidery.

It is still too early to attempt to pick one's way through the maze of materials and the kaleidoscope of colours of the dresses of the last ten years. Careful observation of fashion plates and the study of the innumerable magazines now devoted to the subject of dress fail to reveal any very dominant tendency, unless it be a vogue for using for evening dresses many stuffs which in former years would have been considered suitable only for day wear. The use of such materials is within the memory of most readers. It is too early to say if this is a freak of fashion or has some more permanent significance: it is sufficient to notice it in passing as a curiosity of recent fashions.

The most important thing, however, that happened in the inter-War period was the emergence of an entirely new material: artificial silk. Although this substance, a preparation of wood-pulp, had been in use since the early days of the First World War, and during the twenties had attained a considerable degree of importance among producers of the cheaper line of goods, it was only in the thirties that the manufacture became so skilful and the results so difficult to distinguish from real silk that rayon, as it was now called, took its definite place as one of the important materials of fashion.

This revolution, comparable only with the development of real silk manufacture in Europe under the Byzantine emperors, began in sufficiently humble fashion by the production of the so-called locknit materials. About 1930, however, artificial marocain, satin,

and *crêpe de Chine* began to find their way into the market, and are now accepted as fashionable materials. In fact, the distinction between artificial and real silk is no longer insisted on even by the makers of quite expensive dresses. There is no doubt that we are only at the beginning of a very extensive development, the consequences of which cannot yet be foreseen.

Chapter XV

FURS

THE use of fur for clothing has existed since the very earliest times. Indeed, it seems certain that in cold climates furs were the first garments, seeing that it was natural that, having killed an animal for food, primitive man should make use of the skin in order to keep himself warm, nature having provided him with so little protective covering of his own.

Fur as an ornament was known and esteemed by the Chinese 3500 years ago, and in later periods was known as a mark of rank. A similar situation obtained in medieval Europe, when fur was a luxury, forbidden to monks and all but the highest ecclesiastics, and regulated among the laity by severe sumptuary laws. It was chiefly worn by men, and was regarded as a mark of dignity and office, a use which persists in the judge's ermine and, of course, in the robes worn by peers on ceremonial occasions, when the number of bars of miniver is rigidly regulated according to the wearer's rank.

During the Middle Ages furs were chiefly obtained from Northern and Central Europe, but the opening up of America, especially of Canada by French explorers, provided new sources of supply. It may be said, however, that it was not until the nineteenth century that fur was a fashion, and not until the very end of the century that its use became at all widespread. The rapid increase in the use of fur in the early twentieth century is thought to have been one of the effects of American central heating and the invention of the motor-car. With the exception of the fur coat of the very old gentleman or the theatre impresario, furs in Western Europe are worn almost entirely by women, and it is their connexion with and their effect upon fashion which we have now to consider.

During the whole of the earlier part of the nineteenth century fur was used principally as a trimming, and the descriptions of

fashion plates are usually so vague in their terminology that it is often difficult to determine which particular fur was used. A commentator of 1812, for example, speaks merely of "light-coloured spotted fur" as a trimming for a cloth pelisse. In the late twenties we find mention of muffs and tippets of sable, and muffs of white Siberian fox. Ermine was principally used as a lining for pelisses and similar garments, and less costly furs as a lining for boots and gloves.

It is in the eighties that we find the first evidence of an increase in the use of fur in women's fashion. In the middle eighties astrakhan was very popular as a trimming, especially on the small Hussar jacket fashionable at the period. Coarse astrakhan was comparatively cheap and quickly became popular—a popularity which persisted well into the new century, until, indeed, astrakhan was driven out by its much more expensive rival—Persian lamb. But among those who could afford it the most sought-after fur in the eighties was undoubtedly sealskin. We find a fur company in 1887 advertising its "lustred Alaska and Shetland sealskin" in the form of sacques, mantlets, capes, and dolmans. The garments made of this material were probably the first fur coats in the strict sense—that is to say, coats made entirely of fur. And in the same period fur coats were produced for men. Here the fur was on the inside of the coat, except for cuffs and collar, which were either of sealskin, like the rest, or of some other fur. For those who could not afford sealskin there were cheaper substitutes, such as musk sealskin, and—cheaper still—a plush to resemble sealskin, which was known as seal-plush. It is interesting to note that the comparative prices of a real sealskin coat, a musk sealskin, and a seal-plush were respectively twenty-five to forty guineas, seven guineas, and three guineas. At the end of the eighties, although sealskin was still the most fashionable fur, we find mention also of sable, sea-otter, and silver fox, but these were still used only as trimmings. Short jackets, long coats, dolmans, capes, and boas were made entirely of sealskin. Indeed, so great was the demand for this fur during the last quarter of the nineteenth century that the seal herds which had formerly swarmed in the Shetlands, Iceland, etc., were in grave danger of extinction, and it was found necessary

to make international agreements regulating the killing of the seal.

In the early nineties it became the fashion to trim sealskin coats with sable, but in the same period there was a revival of ermine for evening and opera cloaks. We find such cloaks trimmed with other furs, principally sable, and also—strange to relate—with lace, as the taste of the period saw nothing incongruous in such a mixture. At the end of the nineties there was a greater variety of fur, and the advertisements of a fur company in 1898 are not without interest. They include:

> A luxurious model cloak of mink, with a yoke of rose-pink velvet embroidered in white with many circular rows of golden-brown mirror velvet, lined with rose-pink satin. . . . A dainty sac coatee of Russian sable with a circular front and a double frill and revers on the front. The sleeves are plushed green leather. . . . An elegant three-quarter-length coat in broadtail, with a shaped flounce round the edge. Collar, front, and cuffs of either sable or chinchilla. . . . A smart full-length coat of seal, with collar of Russian sable and a double frill down the front of sable and wide edging of the same fur. The lining is composed of ermine.

It need hardly be added that such garments were out of reach of all but the wealthy.

The fashion for fur trimmings was revived and pushed to extravagant lengths throughout the whole of what we have called the garden-party and casino period. Fur was used in the most unlikely places. In 1897 we even find a sealskin blouse, which must, most people would imagine, have been uncomfortably hot to the wearer. A mixture of velvet and fur, generally sable, was extremely popular, and, of course, the long thin fur boa was almost universal, until it was driven out by the greater popularity of the feather boa.

In the early years of the new century the muff became a very important article of attire, and some one hit on the happy idea of making the hat to match, so that we find for a time a craze for fur hats. All kinds of furs—ermine, chinchilla, sable, fox, and even sealskin—were used for this purpose, mostly on smallish toques, but sometimes as trimmings on larger hats. Even flowers were made with twists of fur, with hearts of gold tissue or muslin. In

fact, there was, in the words of a commentator of the period, "a rage for using peltry in every possible form," even the most unsuitable. We find narrow bands of black fox used as a trimming on white satin princess dresses; we find a skating dress trimmed with bands of moleskin, and with revers of tailless ermine. The deep and soft grey fur of the opossum was a favourite for collars and cuffs on black velvet coats for day wear. Restaurant and carriage cloaks had deep shawls and sailor collars of ermine or chinchilla. Those who did not wish to have their coats entirely of fur could have them of cloth trimmed with long sable stoles which reached to the feet, with a muff to match. Chinchilla, indeed, had begun to rival the popularity of sealskin, and about 1903 we find an increasing use of such furs as musquash. A little later moleskins were extremely popular, partly because they could be arranged in patterns, the favourite of which was the chessboard. The cost of such coats reached what seems to us the very moderate figure of thirty pounds.

In the three or four years before the War of 1914 sealskin became more and more difficult to obtain, and an attempt was made to enlist other fur-bearing animals in the service of fashion. In 1912 muffs were prodigiously large, two whole black foxes being sometimes scarcely sufficient for each. With such a muff would be worn a black fox stole, consisting also of two animals. Fox-fur, indeed, was launched on its long career of popularity, which still shows no sign of drawing to a close, although the silver fox has now replaced the other varieties in popular favour. The beginning of 1914 saw a fashion for little fur ties round the throat, sometimes of stone marten, sometimes of fox. White fox was frequently employed for this purpose. The red fox was never so popular, owing to the difficulty of matching its somewhat dominant colour with the colour of the dress.

Just before 1914, however, notable improvements took place in fur-dressing, and particularly in fur-dyeing, owing to the discoveries of the Leipzig chemists. The new use of synthetic dyes made it possible to employ a variety of furs which would before have been despised—particularly rabbit, which, under the name of cony (generally dyed cony), is now an important part of the fur

industry. Marmot could be dyed to represent mink, and musquash to resemble sealskin. A whole new chapter of the fur industry was opened.

The Russian Alliance produced between 1914 and 1917 a new enthusiasm for fur trimmings of all kinds. We read of Cossack coats trimmed with seal musquash, and musquash long coats trimmed with skunk. A commentator remarks, "The dark rich touch of fur is seen on practically every description of coat, and, indeed, on all garments—even to nightgowns and pyjamas." Worse is to follow. "Everything is fur-trimmed, from our hats and handbags to our lingerie. Lots of the newest *crêpe de Chine* 'undies' are edged with fur." It is to be hoped that such eccentricities never found their way much farther than the pages of the fashion journals. The muff was revived, but it was now a barrel-shaped object instead of the immense, unwieldy pouch decorated with heads, tails, teeth, and claws which had previously been fashionable.

One result of the Russian enthusiasm was to introduce several new materials for coats, such as Russian pony, a favourite trimming for which was grey opossum. Opossum, grey astrakhan, and civet were in great demand, and as skunk and ermine were growing increasingly rare, much use was made of the humble rabbit, and even the rat. At the end of the War period squirrel was much utilized, and there was a revival in the use of moleskin. Fashion writers lamented that the cost of chinchilla, sable, and broadtail had increased to such an extent that they were now unobtainable except by the extremely wealthy. "Not long ago," we read, "the leaders of fashion regarded mink with scorn," a remark which, owever natural it may have sounded in 1924, has a very odd ring to-day. Seal was increasingly difficult to obtain, and was replaced by seal musquash and seal cony, the latter being less expensive than the former and the skin not so brittle. Several short-lived eccentricities were introduced, such as cream-coloured coats for Deauville decorated with yellow badger, but these never had very much effect on the general trend of fur fashion. The great vogue of the nineteen-twenties was for fox, especially for silver fox, and in the winter of 1924–25 a new supply of skins was forthcoming,

the silver fox having been successfully bred in captivity. White fox was much used, dyed to various shades of beige, cinnamon, and poppy, or sometimes in its natural colour as an evening wrap. The silver fox as a tie formed of a single skin became a regular item in almost every woman's wardrobe.

In the late twenties there was hardly any fur-bearing animal which was not made to contribute to feminine attire: among the most popular—although it is not, strictly speaking, a fur at all—was Persian lamb, the finer variety of astrakhan obtained by killing the lambs as soon as they were born, and even sometimes, sad to relate, before they were born. As an animal so young yielded but a small area of fur or hide, the cost of a coat made of such material was correspondingly expensive, but, indeed, the immense cost of furs in the nineteen-twenties would have astonished even the most luxurious women of an earlier generation. Mink coats ranging in price from five hundred to a thousand guineas are not at all unknown in the trade catalogues, and the extreme costliness of the more highly prized furs has helped to extend the number of animals whose pelts could be used. Coats were made of Russian pony trimmed sometimes with skunk; scarves were made of skunk, baum marten, or mink-dyed kolinsky. Substitutes and imitations of all kinds became common, and blended marmot scarf stoles were advertised—"equal in appearance to real sable." A mink-marmot coat could be purchased "worked just like mink." All kinds of combinations of furs were tried: squirrel collared with fox, Persian lamb trimmed with mink kolinsky, Persian lamb trimmed with sable squirrel, natural squirrel trimmed with platinum fox, American broadtail (lamb) trimmed with natural mink, brown pony-skin trimmed with fox, etc. In the thirties grey Indian lamb made its appearance, and nutria was popular. There was also a temporary vogue for leopard and the fur of other spotted beasts.

Chapter XVI

BATHING COSTUMES AND OTHER SPORTS CLOTHES

In any account of fashion during the last hundred and fifty years bathing costumes merit a chapter to themselves. They deserve study if only for the absurdity which is implicit in their very existence. The Greeks, with their unselfconscious attitude towards the body, would have thought that anyone who put on clothes in order to go into the water was more than a little mad. There was a good deal of bathing throughout the Middle Ages, in spite of the frowns of the Christian Church, but such bathing took place indoors, generally—it must be admitted in justification of the Church's attitude—in houses which were little better than brothels. Contemporary illuminations show men and women sitting side by side in large tubs with a table of delicacies before them. Both are naked.

But, so far as can be ascertained, it never occurred to anyone to bathe in the sea, except by accident, until very shortly before the opening of the period we have chosen for our study of costume. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century the sea was neglected. No one went to the seaside for pleasure, but only because they had to make some journey to a foreign country. Nobody lived there unless they were compelled to do so because they were fishermen or boat-builders by trade. Such houses as were built near the seashore turned their backs resolutely upon the ocean: the sea was part of their backyard, a kind of infinitely enlarged cesspool. Such, strange as it may seem, was the universal attitude. But in the year 1750 a certain Dr Richard Russell published a Latin treatise upon the uses of sea-water, both for internal and external application. Four years later he did what was perhaps more important—he built himself a house at Brighton where the Royal Albion Hotel now stands. It was the beginning of a movement which was to have vast consequences, and once seaside resorts

had been established they developed with amazing rapidity. By the end of the century a watering-place no longer meant an internal spa where you went to drink the waters: it meant the seaside, where you went to bathe.

An air of heroism clung for a time about the strange new practice. Smollett in *Humphrey Clinker* describes "strip and plunge" as a curious novelty, and those who came immediately after him took their bathing seriously enough never to indulge in the practice without the aid of a bathing man or a bathing woman, who seized them in strong arms and plunged them beneath the surface of the water, taking care to see that they swallowed as great a quantity as possible in the process. This was supposed, in accordance with the tenets of Dr Russell, to be extremely beneficial to the health. In Rowlandson's illustrations to *The Poetical Sketches of Scarborough* we catch some of our earliest glimpses of bathing in progress. The sexes were separated, and with good reason, for, so far as can be ascertained from contemporary evidence, it was still the practice to bathe naked. One of Rowlandson's pictures shows a group of elderly gentlemen on a cliff looking through spy-glasses at the bathing nymphs; but the practice was not nearly so startling as it might appear, for the bathers were carried out a considerable distance from the shore in bathing machines, and they descended into the water under cover of a huge umbrella-like structure which effectively concealed them from the eyes of spectators till they were almost entirely immersed. Even this protection was soon felt to be insufficient, and while men for a time continued to bathe without any clothes at all, ladies provided themselves with a flannel robe, which was tied round their necks and descended to their heels.

> The ladies, dressed in flannel cases,
> Show nothing but their hands and faces.

The robe was tied fairly tightly underneath the chin, but its lower edge was not fastened at all, and so it spread out on the surface of the water, and the fair bather paddled about underneath it, with complete freedom of movement. So long as it was not desired to indulge in any violent swimming it is obvious that there was much to be said for such a contrivance—far more than for some

of the voluminous bathing dresses of the next century; but although the umbrella hood at the back of the bathing machine had now been rendered quite unnecessary, it was actually retained until well past the middle of the nineteenth century, and all that anyone ever saw of a woman bather was her head, with her hair floating behind her.

There is a sad lack of documentary evidence for the forms of bathing dresses during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, and it is difficult to say when they were first invented. The early ones were extremely voluminous, consisting of ample pantaloons and a thick and roomy dress with long sleeves and reaching to the throat. The whole outfit was adorned with frills and flounces, which when wet must have made it even heavier. It was obviously quite impossible for women to indulge in any very active water sports. Men, on the other hand, early adopted small striped trunks, a sensible costume which they were afterwards to abandon for the so-called 'regulation university' swimming suit. It is only within the most recent years that they have got back to trunks again. Even now these are sometimes forbidden in public baths and at the seaside.

By the middle of the seventies women's bathing costumes had become stylized into something like the shape shown in the plate opposite p. 177. A knee-length dress very little simpler than an ordinary dress of the period, with no more décolletage but slightly shorter sleeves, revealed beneath it trousers reaching to mid-calf, elaborately trimmed and braided. Straw hats of a peculiar form were worn with this outfit. They were trimmed with ribbons, and were obviously never intended to be immersed in the water. One cannot help wondering whether any part of the garment was meant to be immersed. It would certainly have been extremely hampering to an energetic swimmer.

By the middle eighties women's bathing costumes had become a little more daring. Some of them consisted of what is apparently a one-piece garment, reaching from the knees to the throat, and with very short sleeves. Sometimes the top of the suit was décolleté about as much as an evening dress of the period, and the trouser-leg had risen to within several inches above the knee. But the

majority of women bathers, at least in England, added a skirt of knee-length, and this costume remained unchanged, with very few variations, for many years to come. The strange thing is that in the seventies, eighties, and nineties people had become so accustomed to seeing women with narrow waists that these were considered necessary even in bathing costumes. Corsets were accordingly worn underneath. A picture of bathers at Blankenberghe in 1893 shows a fashionable lady in knickerbockers buttoning below the knees, the upper part of her body clothed in a kind of blouse, with a frill round the throat and an extremely tight waist, which could only have been attained by lacing. Round her head she wears a pocket handkerchief, and on her feet are sand shoes with crossed lacing like the shoes of a ballet dancer. But even this outfit was considered too daring and Continental to be permissible at the English seaside.

At the beginning of the twentieth century bathing costumes were for a time even more proper, and it became the custom to wear stockings, either black or white. By 1906 we begin to find photographs of popular actresses in the illustrated papers, clothed in bathing costumes and poised before studio waves. A photograph of Miss Gabrielle Ray taken in 1908 shows her in a bathing costume which might have been an ordinary summer dress, except that it ends at the knee. There is the same full, overhanging blouse and the same fullness of skirt. It is obvious that it had long ceased to be the fashion to put the head under water, for the *coiffure* is most elaborate.

By 1911 knickerbockers under the skirt had been abandoned in favour of shorts, which usually protruded three or four inches below the skirt and ended just above the knee. The sleeve, which in 1908 had reached to the elbow, had now almost disappeared, although it was a considerable number of years before it vanished completely. We see a constant tendency to follow the main lines of contemporary dress. In 1919, for instance, the over-tunic is both short and wide, and the ballet dancer's shoes have been replaced by high laced boots. In 1920 the over-skirt shows the wide pannier effect of contemporary evening dresses, and the tubular bathing costumes of 1925 are as shapeless as that year's

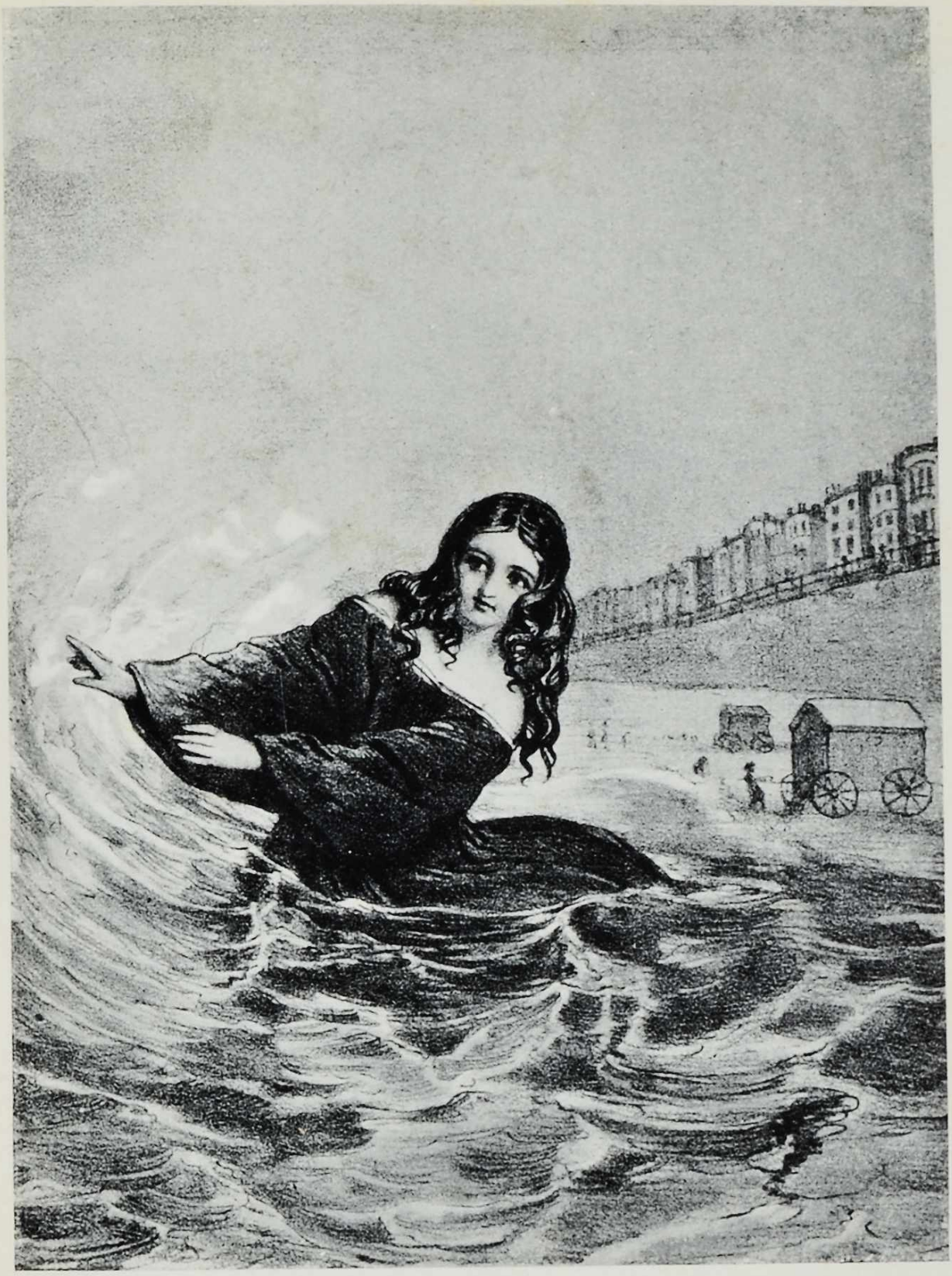
gowns. It is surprising how recent the extremely exiguous bathing costume is. Even in 1928 it had ample over-skirts and very limited décolletage.

As far back as the seventies oilskin mob-caps had been worn, and from about 1904 there were caps of sponge-bag check cotton rubberized on the inside and red rubber caps pleated into a head band lined with stockinette. During and after the First World War a confliction of two or three different coloured rubbers ornamented with rubber flowers was much worn. The white rubber bathing helmet arrived in 1924. It looked neat, but was not as effective for keeping the hair dry as the earlier sponge-bag variety.

It was not sea-bathing, but sun-bathing which really effected a revolution in the form of bathing costumes. If it was really helpful to expose the skin to the action of sunlight, obviously the more of it you could expose the better. Bathing costumes accordingly became shorter and shorter. The over-skirt in some instances disappeared altogether, or else was reduced to a dimension of two or three inches. The armholes grew larger and larger, and the décolletage more pronounced.

In 1930 we get the first backless bathing costume, no more backless, however, than the evening dresses of the period. This costume, with or without an over-skirt, is the bathing costume of to-day, although it is being replaced by the two-piece bathing costume, consisting only of shorts and brassière. In German bathing places before the Nazi reaction young girls often appeared in public wearing only shorts, leaving the breasts exposed; but this has never been allowed in England except in the privacy of sun-bathing societies. In Scandinavian countries men and women often bathe without any costumes at all, which is perhaps the only logical kind of bathing costume. Such is the evolution of a garment which has a briefer history than any other kind of human dress.

In the chapter on the New Woman we have already dealt with the social significance of the enthusiasm for tennis, which arose in the early eighties and has been steadily increasing ever since. At first tennis clothes for women were simply ordinary garden-party clothes, and did not permit of any very strenuous action at the net. Even for men a typical tennis costume had not yet stereotyped



THE IMPUDENT WAVE
Lithograph after Alfred Crowquill. 1848

Bathing Dresses, 1877
From *The Milliner and Dressmaker*

itself, and in the lawn-tennis championship at Wimbledon in 1887, while some of the men played in long white trousers as they would do to-day, a considerable proportion of them wore white flannel knickerbockers with black stockings. Many of them wore a coloured cricketing cap, and some of the women adopted this headgear also, which fitted well enough on the short hair of the period.

Women were less fortunate than men, for they were compelled to wear some slight modification of the costume of the day, and, as the plate opposite p. 180 shows, the bustle was considered necessary for tennis players almost until the end of the eighties. In the middle nineties the bustle, of course, had vanished, but women still played tennis in a long trailing skirt, a tight corset, and a blouse with voluminous sleeves. Also, only too often, they added an elaborate befeathered or beflowered hat. The game, as can well be imagined, was then by no means as strenuous as it has since become.

There was, however, an attempt to approximate to the male costume, as being more sensible and suitable, but such approximation consisted for the most part in the adoption of the 'boater' or male straw hat, which in the middle nineties was a frequent article of female wear in ordinary dress, or at least in sports attire. In 1894 most of the famous women players of the day wore a coat and skirt and a man's straw hat perched on the top of their heads.

At the beginning of the century well-known actresses began to be photographed in their gardens "ready for lawn tennis." A photograph of Miss Marie Studholme which appeared in the *Sketch* in 1901 shows the lady in a long dark-coloured skirt, a white or cream blouse with long sleeves and an elaborate lace collarette, and on her head an immense hat covered with a veil of white lace.

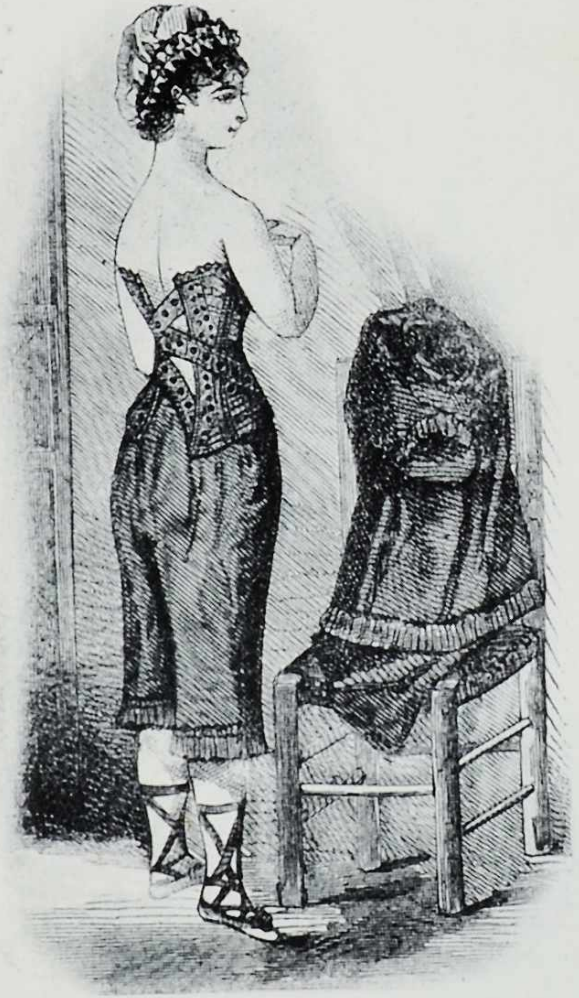
By 1906 the hat had been generally abandoned. The accepted uniform was still very similar—a coloured skirt and a white blouse, sometimes, however, with short sleeves. In the following year it seems to have become usual to wear a white skirt, and tennis costume made a further stride on its way to becoming a uniform. Unfortunately, the vogue for stiff masculine collars led many ladies of this period to play tennis in a choker and tie, thus hindering very much their quickness in following the ball. Mrs Fenwick, who won the Ladies' Championship for 1908, was entirely clothed

in white, but her skirt was extremely full and swirling, and her sleeves were so long that they almost concealed the hands. By 1912 the fullness of skirts even in day wear had disappeared, and tennis modes reflected this tendency. They were also sensibly shorter, and the hobble skirt never made its appearance on the tennis court, for the very sufficient reason that it would have been impossible to play in it at all. This was perhaps yet another step towards the establishment of a definite costume for tennis.

In 1919 the game was played in a long, very full skirt, a woollen jumper, and a hat or bandeau. Suzanne Lenglen was one of the first to wear a shorter skirt, and her success contributed to establish this new mode; but as late as 1921 we find tennis being played in an ordinary summer frock, quite long and with sleeves, worn sometimes with a hat and sometimes without. We also find the short-lived reign of tennis *boots*, an echo of the passion for high-laced bootwear which had endured throughout the second half of the War period.

For the next five or six years the skirts of day dresses grew steadily shorter and shorter, and the tennis skirt naturally followed a mode so consonant with its own purposes. By 1927 it was knee-length, worn with a V-neck blouse without sleeves. It is perhaps unnecessary to remark that stockings were still worn,but the extreme fineness of stockings which came in about this period rendered them unsuitable for so strenuous a game as tennis, and so it became the fashion to wear short socks over the stockings. It was not until 1931 that Mrs Fearnley-Whittingstall, playing at Forest Hills in the United States of America, appeared on the courts with bare legs. She wore on this occasion short socks rolled over the top of the shoe, a short pleated skirt, and a short waisted woollen jumper. In spite of some opposition the stockingless mode triumphed, because it enabled women to abandon any kind of corset or other support for the suspenders which stockings made necessary. Stockings are now as obsolete in tennis dress as they are in bathing costumes, and for the same reason—that they are a nuisance.

What had seemed the natural evolution of tennis costumes was, however, seriously interrupted at the end of the twenties by the



Corset for Bathing, 1877

Bathing at Blankenberghe, 1893

Bathing Costume, 1905

BATHING COSTUMES: 1907, 1935

reversion of ordinary clothes to long skirts. Tennis skirts immediately followed suit, and by 1931, the year of Mrs Fearnley-Whittingstall's startling innovation in the matter of stockings, they had already returned to half-way down the calf. So strong was the reaction against the ordinary modes of the late twenties that the short skirt became impossible even on the tennis court, and some other solution had to be found; for it was inconceivable that women should return for that extremely vigorous game to the hampering folds of cloth which they had endured earlier in the century.

In April 1931 Señorita de Alvarez played in divided skirts, which came to slightly below the knee, and two years later Miss Alice Marble, of San Francisco, appeared in shorts above the knee. For some time the designers of tennis frocks were undecided, and even in 1934 quite long skirts were offered to the tennis playing public. Shorts, however, were growing in popularity, and received great impetus from the example, once more, of Mrs Fearnley-Whittingstall, and also of Miss Kathleen Stammers, whose extreme elegance in these garments induced a host of other women to follow her example.

Some of the early designs for shorts were not very happy. A short tight garment, such as is worn by men in athletic contests, is not in general very flattering to the feminine figure, and so in 1935 a new kind of pleated shorts was introduced, which looked, at a distance, like a very short skirt. This mode has stabilized itself, and although tennis is still played in skirts the number of shorts, which are all slightly pleated, but end well above the knee, has grown steadily. It seems possible that women's tennis costume has at last crystallized into a uniform as absolute as that, for example, which is worn by men when playing football.

Golf has not so far resulted in so absolute a crystallization. There is no feminine equivalent of plus-fours, which at one time seemed likely to become the male golfing costume in perpetuity. So far as women were concerned, the difference between early golf costume and early tennis costume was this: that while tennis costume was an adapted form of the garden-party dress, golf costume was an adapted form of country clothes, such as would have been

worn for walking or shooting. Owing to the Scottish origin of golf there was a preference for heavy tweeds. A fashion plate of 1905 shows a lady with a golf club in her hand in a tweed suit with revers like a man's coat, above which can be seen a collar or neck-cloth. On her head she wears an immense tweed cap of the same material. Photographs of actresses playing golf in the first five or six years of the century show that in general they wore the same clothes as they might have worn for tennis, only perhaps a little warmer: the coloured skirt and the white blouse. Men, of course, wore tweed knickerbockers, and it is interesting to discover that a caricature of 1911 shows that some of these knickerbockers were already enormously wide, although the vogue of plus-fours was still several years in the future. Older-fashioned men were content with tight knickerbockers and a Norfolk jacket.

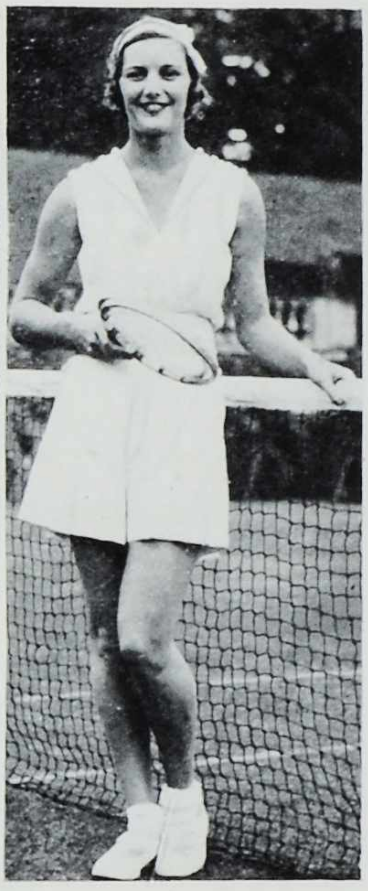
The period immediately following the War was, for women, the age of the jumper, and in no sphere was it more appropriate than in the world of golf players. It was worn in general with a coarse tweed skirt, reaching half-way down the calf. It may be said, indeed, that the skirt and the jumper remained the accepted wear for golf until the end of the twenties, the only difference being that the skirt gets gradually shorter and shorter, until it is above the knee. About the year 1929 the jumper was suddenly replaced by a little jacket, which was sometimes of leather.

The early thirties, which witnessed the decay of plus-fours among men and their replacement by flannel trousers, saw also trousers for women golfers. By 1935 these had become quite usual on the golf links of England, although, of course, the tweed skirt was by no means obsolete. It would be incorrect to say that golfing costume has stereotyped itself, and we may yet witness some startling revolutions in the feminine mode for this particular game.

We have already considered the influence of cycling upon the modes of the nineties. The baggy bloomers, however, soon went out in favour of a slightly masculinized version of ordinary female dress. In fact, there was little to distinguish the lady cyclist from her pedestrian sister, except that so long as the nineties lasted she almost invariably thought it necessary to wear a man's straw hat

THE TENNIS COSTUME, 21 5s. 6d.

In Plain or Checked French Fetises, Crêpe-nuere Cloths, or Foules, with Silk Laces, in bright colours, or to match, including [illegible] Yards for Bodice.



Tennis Costumes

(1) An 1886 costume. (2) Miss Dod, 1893 (*photo Russell, Baker Street*). (3) Mrs Lambert Chambers, 1919 (*photo Sport and General*). (4) Miss Joan Fry 1929. (5) Mrs Fearnley-Whittingstall, 1933 (*Press Portrait Bureau*)

Mrs Amelia Bloomer, 1851
From *The Illustrated London News*

Mrs Clarke in Cycling Costume, 1894
Photo Russell and Sons, Wimbledon

Modern Girl Cyclist
Photo Sport and General

or boater. Improvements in cycle construction—notably the enclosing of the chain in a case to prevent the skirt from catching in it—made it possible for ladies to cycle almost in ordinary dress, and this they continued to do until the end of the First World War. Ironically enough, it was not the voluminousness of skirts—for cycling had now become the almost exclusive appanage of the very young or of the comparatively poor—but the extreme shortness of skirts which caused many girls to evolve a costume more suited to the needs of the day. By the middle of the twenties skirts had become so very short that to wear them on a cycle was hardly decent. The end of the twenties saw a widespread adoption, in England at any rate, of shorts for cycling, and nowadays the great majority of young women who go out on Sunday with cycle clubs show a good six or eight inches of leg above the knee. The fears of the early opponents of cycling for women would therefore seem to have been more than justified, but the modern age has accepted this cycling costume just as it has accepted the same garb for hiking—the difference between a walk and a 'hike' being that during the latter pursuit you are allowed to wear considerably fewer clothes.

The enthusiasm for gymnastics which was contemporary with the outburst of the passion for cycling gave rise at first to a very similar costume for women, except that it was in general rather more feminine, for it consisted not only of baggy bloomers, but of a skirt as well. Attempts were made—especially in Germany—to substitute for this a kind of Greek costume; but this was never wholly satisfactory, as notions of decency compelled the girls to wear a Greek costume very much more voluminous than the women of ancient Greece would themselves have used for gymnastic purposes. The ordinary gymnastic costume remained in force for something like a quarter of a century, and has only been modified comparatively recently. It had the interesting result of becoming in a modified form the accepted uniform for schoolgirls. It had no effect whatever on adult fashion.

The same costume was occasionally worn for cricket, as can be seen from an Elliman's advertisement of the middle nineties; but in general such women as played cricket did so in skirts, wearing

the pads underneath them, with ludicrous effect. This was perhaps of small importance, as cricket has never become a popular woman's game. The same may be said of football. Such teams of Association women footballers as exist to-day usually wear the male costume of shirt and shorts.

Hockey, however, soon established itself as a woman's game, and was played in the early nineteen-hundreds in a blouse and skirt, the skirt very full and reaching almost to the ground. On the head was an exaggerated version of the man's cap, the motoring cap of women of the period, or a tam-o'-shanter. The Oxford *v.* Cambridge Ladies hockey match of 1903, however, was played without caps of any kind. Owing to the conservatism of girls' schools, where hockey is usually played, this encumbering costume persisted almost into our own day. In France, where hockey is played by girls of a rather different class, shorts and jerseys were adopted as early as 1920. There was, of course, something to be said for the long, thick skirt for hockey, as it certainly protected the knees and shins from inevitable blows with the sticks.

Skating might have been expected to introduce some modifications into the mode or to create its special dress; but it has only succeeded in doing the latter within the last few years. Early skaters simply wore the outdoor dress of their day. In the sixties there was an outburst of enthusiasm for this sport, and the skirts worn by women skaters were certainly shorter than those worn in everyday life. In the full-length crinoline skirt it would, of course, have been almost impossible to skate at all. Roller-skating was practised at the end of the nineteenth century in ordinary attire, but ice-skating, from the fact that it could only be practised upon naturally produced ice, implied a winter costume. A fashion plate of 1900 announces a skating dress consisting of a walking dress of beige cloth with pleated skirt and beaver *boléro* with chinchilla revers; and another one consisting of a cloth coat with ermine collar, the jacket closed at the sides with braid Brandenburgs and the skirt of heather mixture with pleats fixed half-way down and then flowing open gracefully. In short, a smart winter *toilette*, which, owing to the fullness of the skirt at the period, hardly

needed to be modified in order to make room for the action of skating.

In the early years of the century it became the fashion to trim skating dresses—that is, winter dresses worn for skating—with ermine or miniver. It goes without saying that no very elaborate evolutions on the ice were contemplated. For skating in climes where there was more sun a blouse and skirt were sometimes worn, but for the English winter this was considered too cold.

Skating dresses have never been more absurd than they were in the year 1911, when they followed the lines of fashionable dress so closely as to leave hardly any room for action at all. When ordinary skirts became wider skating dresses became wider too, and they preserved some of their fullness in the years immediately after the War, when skirts were narrow again. The burst of enthusiasm for winter sport introduced Englishwomen to a far higher standard of figure-skating than they had believed possible before.

The extremely short skirts of the middle twenties needed hardly any modification when worn on the ice. The return to long skirts in the late twenties led for a moment to longer skating skirts, but common sense prevailed; or rather it would be truer to say that skating costume by the early thirties had crystallized, and a knee-length skirt with wide flares, forming part of a neat dress in such colours as bottle-green, Burgundy, navy, nigger brown, black, and scarlet, became the accepted wear for ice-rinks. Considerations of colour apart, the skating dress has now become a uniform. The same is true of ski-ing costume, which has now assumed the familiar form of a jacket of cloth, or even of leather, and long trousers of the same material tucked into ski-ing socks. All previous attempts to construct ski-ing dresses of knitted woollen material, fur, and the like have been abandoned owing to their impracticability. A ski-ing costume is now almost as much a uniform as a suit of dungarees, and very similar in form.

One may remark in passing that the stylization of sports clothes, their functional development, and their tendency to become uniforms have robbed them of any chance of influencing contemporary fashion; for a uniform is by its nature a dead end. It is

regarded as something apart, and women are no more likely to be influenced in their ordinary dress by skating costume than by cycling shorts. The main stream of development lies elsewhere.

It only remains to consider the development of riding costume during the last thirty years. So strong is the voice of tradition in riding circles, and especially in the hunting field, that many women still wear the traditional side-saddle costume, only slightly modified from that worn in the eighties; but an increasing number of women have taken to riding astride, and for this purpose have adopted an unconventional male costume, consisting of breeches, boots, and a tweed jacket. The hat has varied. In 1921 it was quite usual to wear a large straw. A bowler or a soft felt hat is now common, although—to the horror of Sir Walter Gilbey—berets have been seen, even in the Row. Sir Walter has proved one of the most persistent opponents of innovations in riding costume, being convinced that the ideal riding costume for women was laid up in heaven, not perhaps from the beginning of time, but, shall we say, from 1840! Men's hunting costume stereotyped itself about 1820, and this garb has now become sacrosanct. That it is not so in reality is shown by the fact that French hunting costume stereotyped itself about 1750, with the result that many French huntsmen wear tricorne hats. In truth, one type is no more eternally valid than the other, and there is no reason why women riding for pleasure should not consider practicality above all things, except, of course, that riding is not only a pleasure, but a cult, and cults have their own ritual and their own vestments, with which it ill beseems the profane to meddle. It seems unlikely, however, that riding costume will ever again influence the current feminine mode.

Chapter XVII

FASHIONS FOR MEN

MEN'S dress during the century and a half covered by the scope of the present volume has been considered incidentally in the course of the preceding chapters. It was impossible, however, to follow it with any completeness, because male and female costume in the modern epoch follow completely different principles of evolution and development. The reason for changes in female costume, the impulses which set the designer to work and which induce women to adopt his creations, will be dealt with more fully in a final chapter on the meaning of fashion. Here it is sufficient to note that the principle of seduction or attractiveness, which is the guiding principle in women's dress, has been for the last hundred and fifty years almost entirely absent from the costume worn by men. Why this should be so is extremely difficult to determine. It is a commonplace that in nature the male is nearly always more splendid than the female, and wins his mate, partly at least, by a sexual display. Up to the end of the eighteenth century men's costumes were equally gorgeous, and it is apparently only since the French Revolution that men have ceased to compete with women in the sphere of fashionable attire.

Dandyism, strangely enough, does not invalidate this conclusion. Whatever the motives of the dandy might be, that they were not primarily the attraction of the other sex is proved conclusively by the career of such a typical dandy as Brummell, who from all accounts, took no interest in women whatever. Nowadays, for a man to be excessively well dressed, or even very conscious of the attractiveness of his clothes, nearly always argues a similar neglect of the other sex.

If we begin our survey of male attire in 1789 we are driven to the conclusion that fashion, in the feminine sense, plays an extremely small part in the development of men's dress. Men's dress, unlike women's, has no natural tendency to change. On the

contrary, its natural tendency is to stereotype itself. It is perpetually crystallizing into a uniform. This may be explained, perhaps, in part by noting that whereas even in modern times, when women have invaded so many spheres of masculine activity, a woman is first of all a woman, and then a typist or a mannequin or a film star, or whatever she may happen to be, a man is first and foremost a lawyer, a banker, or a bricklayer, and only after that a man. In a word, man's function in the State is more important than his function in the home: he tends to adopt the uniform of a profession.

This simple, and apparently obvious, fact is somewhat obscured during the period under consideration by the ideal of gentility, which introduced at times a uniformity overriding even the uniformity of the profession. But to this we must return in a moment.

The question of uniform is an extremely interesting one. Uniforms, properly so called, by which is meant military uniforms, were already almost completely stereotyped at the end of the eighteenth century. The Napoleonic Wars, however, produced a new element, and most of the old uniforms were scrapped. The three-cornered hat, for example, and the tall mitre cap of the English grenadiers disappeared. In their place arose a multitude of new uniforms, those of the cavalry, in particular, being founded upon the national costumes of Eastern Europe; those of the Lancers on the national costume of Poland; of the Hussars on the national costume of Hungary, etc. The bearskin, which still persists in the uniform of the English Guards, was originally a Turkish headdress.

These uniforms in the long peace of thirty years following the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo kept to the same lines and became ever more fantastic. They persisted until the middle of the century, when the success of the French in Italy induced most nations to adopt a modified French uniform. When a nation is successful in war this almost inevitably happens. The United States troops in the American Civil War wore what were in essentials French uniform: the English volunteers of the same period did the same. The defeat of the French and the victory of the Prussians in 1870 brought in a modified spiked helmet, even

for British troops. It needed the South African War of 1899–1902 to introduce a uniform more in keeping with the modern conditions of fighting, and during the next twenty years all the great nations introduced either khaki, horizon blue, or field-grey. In other words, the modifying influences in uniform are, in the first place, the prestige of a victorious nation, and, in the second, the question of practicability, practicability being a more pressing need in conditions of warfare than in ordinary civilian life.

The perpetual tendency of men's costume to stereotype itself into a uniform is shown very clearly in such dresses as those now worn by lawyers, coachmen, huntsmen, page-boys, etc. The modern law-court is a strange anomaly, for while the judge wears a stylized full-bottomed wig of the early eighteenth century, the barristers wear stylized late eighteenth-century wigs, and they both wear with them gowns which have come straight down from the fifteenth century. The academic mortarboard is merely a stiffening of the early sixteenth-century cap. The Lord Mayor of London wears the furred gown and furred cap of the late fifteenth century. His two Sheriffs, on the other hand, wear the dress of the middle of the eighteenth. The Lord Mayor's coachman wears the three-cornered hat with a late eighteenth-century wig similar to that of the barrister. 'Powdered' footmen wear late eighteenth-century dress. The famous button dress of page-boys is merely the ordinary dress of small boys in the eighteen-twenties, which was itself an echo of military costume of the Napoleonic period. The Eton suit is a stereotyping of the dress of older boys at the same period, and it has a black jacket because the boys of Eton went into mourning for George III and have never come out. Commissionaires became stereotyped early in the present century, while the stereotyping of waiters' costume is not noticed only because the costume of male patrons of restaurants has become stereotyped also. Wherever male costume has a chance to polarize in this way it seems to do so; and the same is true of female costumes when these are worn to indicate a definite profession, as that of nursing, or a vocation, like that of nuns or Sisters in the Salvation Army. General Booth's movement started in 1865, and the women workers in his organization still wear the costume of

that date. Nuns' dresses are either the dress of sixteenth-century widows or peasant costume of more or less the same period. But the natural tendency of female dress is quite different, and, indeed, opposed.

We have dealt in the first chapter with the adoption by practically the whole of European men in the early years of the nineteenth century of what was in essence English riding costume. It seems strange that this should have been so, and that the banker going to his City office, his clerk, and even the upper grade of shopkeeper, should all have worn a costume which was devised originally for riding on horseback. But we must remember that the ideal of gentility made every man desire to look like an English country gentleman, even when he wasn't one; and this English country-gentleman costume persisted until half-way through the century, and even beyond. Even the stove-pipe hat—originally the crash helmet of the hunting man—was worn in every walk of life. It might be higher or lower in the crown, it might be made of beaver fur or of silk, its brims might turn up at a sharp angle or remain almost flat—it was none the less the same hat, and it seemed to be everywhere. Every engraving or caricature of, for example, the eighteen-forties tells the same story. Fishmongers wore top-hats, and so did policemen; cricketers wore them, and the members of the Oxford and Cambridge crew, even apparently while they were rowing the race.

The top-hat was the symbol of respectability—aye, more, the symbol of decency, so that a man had to be very low in the social scale not to possess at least one, and to wear it for the greater part of both his labour and his leisure. In correct attire—that is, with the cutaway coat—it was, of course, *de rigueur*. It was essential both with morning and evening dress, and remains so to this day, although within the last few years there has arisen the custom of wearing a soft black hat with a dinner jacket. So important was the top-hat with evening dress that it was considered essential even for the opera, when it was almost inevitably crushed by being placed under the seat. Hence the invention of the opera hat, which, until recently, old-fashioned people still called, after its inventor, a Gibus. This astonishing product of human ingenuity

Skating Costumes: 1911, 1903, 1934

Photo Sport and General

GOLFING COSTUME: 1905, 1929, 1935

appeared before 1848, for it is mentioned in Thackeray's *Book of Snobs*.

We have seen how the dress of the man of 1790 had originally been adopted as a protest against artificiality and as an attempt to get back to simple country modes. It was, it need hardly be said, extremely inconvenient for those country walks and rural excursions which began to be popular in the first half of Victoria's reign. For such excursions were no longer a matter of riding out on horseback; they involved a journey by train, and often a considerable amount of walking. Yet that people did go into the country in thick black coats and top-hats can be seen by anyone who cares to study the documents of the period.

A protest, sooner or later, was inevitable. What had once been country clothes were now so undoubtedly town clothes that there was room for a simpler, more countrified garment to develop. This early took the form of a tweed coat with knickerbockers of the same material and, instead of the high top-hat, a rounded hat or billycock, the ancestor of the modern bowler, or a wideawake, which was the ancestor of the modern soft felt. The straw hat does not make its appearance for another generation.

The actual lounge suit as we know it developed very slowly. At first the desire for less formal attire resulted simply in the shortening of the tails of the cutaway coat, so that the garment reached to very little below the hips, but the vestigial buttons in the small of the back still remained for many years. They can be seen on the coats of old-fashioned farmers in remote country districts to this day. Such men still occasionally preserve the square-shaped hard hat half-way between a top-hat and a bowler; but this was never very popular in town.

In the eighties the development of the lounge suit received a fillip from the enthusiasm for yachting, which led many men to adopt the naval reefer, the ancestor of the double-breasted coat. Lounge suits of the ordinary kind also became increasingly popular, and were worn usually with bowler hats. In formal wear the frock-coat showed signs of revival. It had persisted for the greater part of the century as an alternative to the cutaway, and now gave a hint of ousting it almost completely for formal day wear. In the

nineties and the early years of the present century the frock-coat was the correct wear for all formal occasions, with the curious result that the Japanese have adopted it as their Court costume, and when the Prince of Wales was paying a formal visit to Japan soon after the First World War he found at the last moment that he was expected to provide himself with a kind of coat which in his own country was obsolete except among old-fashioned gentlemen. In the nineties the majority of men lounging in clubs were wearing frock-coats; men who presented themselves at five o'clock tea-parties wore the same costume, and it was for a time *de rigueur* at garden parties and similar functions. This was a curious throw-back to the forms of the eighteenth century, before it had occurred to anyone to cut away the front of coats in order to free the knees for riding.

In the middle nineties there was a great increase in the wearing of knickerbockers, and of the newly invented Norfolk jacket, with its two long vertical pleats down front and back, and its belt. It did away with the necessity of the waistcoat, and the whole outfit was completed by the addition of a soft felt hat with the characteristic dint in the middle, which was to be the hat of the twentieth century, as the top-hat had been the hat of the nineteenth, and the three-cornered hat the hat of the eighteenth. The soft felt hat was often called a trilby. The name was a quite arbitrary one, and was due simply to the desire of the manufacturer to link the new hat with the successful new play founded on Du Maurier's book. Du Maurier's story appeared in *Harper's Magazine* in 1894, and so provides a useful date.

Knickerbockers were at first so popular that they were adopted as sports clothes. Footballers wore them, and even tennis players. Golfers, on whose legs they were destined to persist longest of all, wore them too. They were fairly tight, and were worn, not with shoes, but with ankle boots. But the collar, even in this easy and unconventional attire, was invariably stiff.

By the beginning of the century the lounge suit had established itself as normal wear for all but ceremonial occasions. The skirts of the coat were considerably longer than those of to-day, however, and the coat itself was split up the back. This mode persisted until

MEN'S DRESS: 1887, 1901, 1928, 1931

Essential Lines: 1931, 1936, 1939

the early twenties. The trousers were very narrow, and they were turned up at the bottom—a fashion as odd in its way as the stereotyping of those buttons at the back of morning and of dress coats which were at one time used for holding back the front flap, but ceased to have any functional significance as soon as the front flaps were cut away at the beginning of our period. The trouser-press had been invented in the middle nineties, and resulted in another development—that sharp edge down the front of trousers, which does not seem strange to us only because it is so universal.

The lounge suit was worn with a high stiff collar and sometimes with a bow-tie, with boots occasionally of two colours or with the tops made of cloth, and with a trilby hat. In summer a straw hat, of the circular boater variety, was substituted, and so popular was this headgear that about the year 1901 it even seems to have been worn with riding-breeches. It remained for the Americans of the early nineteen-twenties to wear it with a dinner jacket, a mode pleasantly perpetuated by the theatrical costume of Maurice Chevalier. One of the curiosities of the costume of this period is that the coat of the lounge suit was made of the same material as the trousers, and was often worn with a differently coloured waistcoat—white in summer or with coloured ribbing in winter—the ancestor of the modern cardigan and pullover.

The influence of Riviera fashions, and also of the American mode, brought in lighter materials for summer than had ever been worn before. The trousers were extremely narrow, and remained so until the advent of Oxford trousers in the middle twenties.

By 1910 shoes instead of boots had become usual, at least among the young and fashionable, and as this drew attention to the socks, they ceased to be the dun-coloured, thick objects they had been before, and began to be made of softer material and in various colours. The 'knut' of the period immediately before 1914 was distinguished above all else by the brightness of his socks.

Since that period the lounge suit has in essentials altered extremely little. It became shorter about 1922, and was therefore able to dispense with the slit up the back. The decay of the waistcoat—a West End tailor recently informed the present writer that the demand for waistcoats was only half what it had been when he

set up in business thirty years before—led to a new increase in the popularity of double-breasted coats. The single-breasted coat, however, still continued, and in the late twenties there was a craze for double-breasted waistcoats to go with it.

The only other change to be chronicled occurred in 1925. The undergraduates of Oxford suddenly took to wearing trousers cut extremely wide, so wide that sometimes only the tip of the boot was visible, and the trousers flopped about the leg in the most extraordinary fashion. So extravagant a mode was not likely to last long, and by the end of the year extremely wide trousers had disappeared, but they had left their mark on contemporary dress, and trousers have never been so narrow since as they were before 'Oxford bags' arrived upon the scene. It is only necessary to compare men's evening dress of 1920 and 1930 in order to observe the change. Incidentally, one may note that the old joke about a Frenchman's trousers being "Toulon and Toulouse" is now completely obsolete, seeing that nothing marks the modern Frenchman more distinctly than the comparative tightness of his trousers.

Meanwhile knickerbockers had been enjoying an increased vogue. For some obscure reason the breeches worn by Guards officers during the Great War differed from the riding-breeches of officers in line regiments by being extremely baggy, and so loose as to hang over the top of the puttees. These had an extraordinary effect on ordinary knickerbockers, which immediately after the War began to be cut in the same fashion, only even more amply. The new baggy knickerbockers were called 'plus-fours,' and the name has clung to them ever since, although their popularity within recent years has shown signs of waning among the more fashionable. They became for a time the golfing garment *par excellence*, and were even worn for many other sports, for which their suitability was even less apparent. The present writer can remember that when he cycled through the villages of Herefordshire in the summer of 1921, wearing a suit of plus-fours, he was often surrounded by a crowd of curious children eager to gaze upon the new and extraordinary garment. Englishmen who travelled abroad in plus-fours in the same year were sometimes embarrassed by the crowds of the curious who followed them.

Within five years, however, plus-fours had become known everywhere, and by the early thirties they were worn by all classes on holiday. Later, unhappily, they were even worn by girls when cycling or riding pillion, although a less graceful garment for the female figure can hardly be imagined. They completely drove out the old knickerbocker costume, which henceforward was only worn by old-fashioned intellectuals. They are in many ways the most typical sartorial invention of the epoch between the Wars.

The lounge suit seems destined to remain the typical male costume of the twentieth century. There are from time to time attempts to break away from it, the most powerful of which are those which spring from the new passion for sun-bathing, especially in hot places like the South of France. This practice has given increased popularity to flannel trousers, which, after having been persistently grey from the decade following the War, are now beginning to be made in different colours. These do away with braces, which the Americans have largely discarded altogether. The Englishman, however, in general clings to his braces as being much more comfortable than a belt, and it is unlikely that they will go out in England with ordinary dress. The shirt with the detachable collar is also threatened by the sports shirt made in one piece. The waistcoat shows signs of being replaced by the pullover. In the middle twenties this took the form of the so-called Fair Isle sweater, with very elaborate horizontal knitted patterning. This in turn has been driven out by the grey, blue, or wine-coloured pullover, of a much lighter material.

Efforts which have been made to displace the lounge suit for ordinary wear have been defeated chiefly by the modern man's need for pockets. It is all very well on holidays to lounge about in a pair of flannel trousers and a coloured shirt, but the man going about his business needs to carry so many things—pocket-book, fountain-pen, cigarette-lighter, etc.—that unless he is willing, like women, to carry about with him a small bag, the lounge suit seems unlikely to be replaced—at least in our own generation. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that the lounge suit is now worn by all classes, even by workmen. English workmen never seem to have realized the advantages of the French workman's blouse, and even

in country places the smock, the English equivalent of the blouse, is now obsolete. The difficulty of bending in trousers, or even of sitting down in them without hitching them up—a difficulty largely obviated by the width of the modern garment—is countered by workmen by the simple expedient of strapping them underneath the knee. There is every sign that the normal male costume of the twentieth century has set hard.

Those garments which have been carried over from the nineteenth century are now uniforms. The frock-coat has disappeared entirely, the rounded cutaway or morning coat is now only worn at weddings, Royal garden parties, Ascot, or the Eton and Harrow match. The evening form of the cutaway persists, but for informal dining has been largely replaced by the dinner jacket.

The evolution of modern evening dress merits a special consideration. In our chapter on Romanticism we have discussed the causes of the sudden blackness of evening clothes in the middle of the last century. That blackness they have retained ever since.

The only variation to be noted in full evening dress is the growth of the popularity of white waistcoats. In the middle nineties the black waistcoat with the tail-coat, while not universal, was certainly usual, and the same was still true at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even the white tie with a tail-coat was not universal. In a *Punch* drawing of 1905 showing a party of upper-class people one old gentleman is wearing a tail-coat and black waistcoat with a white tie, another is wearing the same with a black tie, and a young man is wearing a dinner jacket with a black waistcoat and a white tie. The dinner jacket, which it is now considered a solecism, even in the United States, to call a tuxedo, has, however, every right to that name, for it was originally invented by those American millionaires who lived in Tuxedo Park, near New York, and who, constantly dining with one another and wishing to change their clothes, yet felt that the ordinary tail-coat was excessively formal and uncomfortable. They therefore brought in a short coat, with a roll silk collar, which it retained till immediately after the First World War. Some recent models seem to indicate that this roll collar is about to return,

and even to be transferred by analogy to the tail-coat itself. It was soon established as correct that with a dinner jacket should be worn a black tie and a black waistcoat, although the rule about the waistcoat was violated by the Prince of Wales almost immediately, and for a time he set a fashion for white waistcoats with dinner jackets. The vogue in the late nineteen-twenties for a double-breasted dinner jacket enable the waistcoat to be dispensed with altogether, if desired. Within the last few years soft shirts and soft turn-down collars have been increasingly worn with double-breasted dinner jackets. In the early twenties it was established that with a tail-coat should be worn a white tie and a white waistcoat, and only very old-fashioned gentlemen may now be found deviating from this rule.[1] All attempts to introduce coloured evening clothes have so far failed, except that a very dark blue, known as 'midnight blue,' for dinner jackets has occasionally made its appearance. On the Continent the tail-coat has almost entirely disappeared, and the dinner jacket is the only recognized evening wear. Tail-coats are, however, kept for weddings, even if these take place in the middle of the day.

[1] For audiences with the Pope a black waistcoat with a tail-coat and a white tie is *de rigueur*.

Chapter XVIII

SOME CONCLUSIONS

We have now pursued for a hundred and fifty years the complex story of the evolution of European dress. We have sketched its main outline and pursued the subject through some tempting bypaths, and we have seen many seeming trifles take on an unexpected significance in the light of historical perspective. Only the superficial will consider such a subject a waste of time, for although the history of feminine elegance and the history of culture are not precisely the same thing, their courses are curiously parallel. It is useless for Puritans of every period to sigh for the simple, uncorrupted manners of their fathers. Every age has enjoyed what luxury it could, and the degree of its luxury has been, almost always, the measure of its civilization.

We need not here pause to investigate the moral questions involved; whether civilization in itself be good or bad is beside the point. We shall have done something to clear the ground if we can arrive at a satisfactory definition of elegance. What is this magical quality which some quite ugly women are able to make use of to enslave the world? What force lies in an inch more or an inch less of chiffon, in a waistline now high, now low, in complexions healthily brown or delicately pale, in legs long or short, in thighs massive or slender, in bosoms boyish or imperial?

The consideration of the smallest freak of fashion lands us inevitably into the discussion of the profoundest problems of human nature, into the obscurest corners of the history of social evolution.

Clothes, like the skins of animals, serve a double and somewhat inconsistent purpose. They are both self-protective and self-assertive. They serve to merge the individual in his environment, and are the most potent weapons of the recurrent parade of love. The tiger in the jungle and the broker in the City both assume the

colour of their surroundings; while the brightness and beauty of fashion find their echo in the mating season of birds.

The biologist from a fragment of bone can reconstruct the entire primeval beast; the student of clothes and the accessories that go with them, from the broken handle of a fan, from a cameo or a shoe-buckle, can build up a convincing picture of a bygone age. Josephine's Egyptian brooches enshrine the Oriental ambitions of Napoleon; the enamelled surface of a rococo snuff-box reflects the entire age of Louis XV; the jointed umbrella of an early Victorian lady implies a complete attitude to life. These things are more than relics—they are symbols, and the crinoline is as much a monument as the Albert Memorial.

Fashion is a very complex thing. Its rules are infinitely obscure, and one is almost forced back on the mystical notion that there lies some mysterious satisfaction in being in harmony with the spirit of one's age. In any period those are happiest who adapt themselves most completely to their surroundings, and woman is marvellously adaptable. She is soft and coquettish in the age of Greuze, Olympian in 1800, languishing in 1840, mysteriously medieval with the Pre-Raphaelites, perverse with the 'naughty nineties,' and boyish and athletic in the period which is just passing away.

Art has been defined as "exaggeration *à propos*," and the artist is he who knows what to exaggerate. To know this beforehand is not so easy as it afterwards seems, for it implies an exact and instinctive vision of what are indeed the essential lines. In the same way elegance, or so it seems to me, is essentially exaggeration *à propos*, and its successful practice is as instinctive in its operation and as magical in its effect as the creation of a work of art.

The creation of fashion is now highly organized and commercialized; none the less the most skilful of Paris dressmakers can do no more than trim their sails to the prevailing wind. In 1928 they laboured in vain to bring in long skirts for evening dresses; in 1931 they laboured in vain who tried to keep them out. A hundred years hence grave historians will illustrate their account of the gradual subsidence of post-War hysteria by pointing to the more feminine modes which prevailed in the early nineteen-

thirties. They will be justified, no doubt, but who can prophesy these things? The historical method is, after all, the safe one, and that is the method we have attempted to pursue.

There is nothing which is more surely part of ourselves than the *décor* of our lives. Even the much ridiculed male attire of the present day is expressive to the ultimate degree. It is industrialism modified by sport, just as the costume of an eighteenth-century nobleman represented gallantry controlled by etiquette, with relics of feudalism still clanking by his side. The costume of the period, even its male costume, is the mirror of the soul. How much more, then, must feminine costume, with its perpetual fluidity, express? We are assured by Wordsworth that:

> One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can.

Tennyson expressed more or less the same sentiments concerning the "flower in the crannied wall." A more urban observer might, with equal justice, pick up from a woman's dressing-table, or from the floor of her bedroom, no matter what trifle. It would tell him more of woman than most of the sages can; and if it told him of woman it would tell him also of man, for man in every age has created woman in the image of his own desire. It is false flattery of women to pretend that this is not so. Woman is the mould into which the spirit of the age pours itself, and to those with any sense of history no detail of the resulting symbolic statue is without importance. To the true philosopher there are no trivialities.

In every period costume has some essential line, and when we look back over the fashions of the past we can see quite plainly what it is, and can see what is surely very strange, that the forms of dresses, apparently so haphazard, so dependent on the whim of the designer, have an extraordinary relevance to the spirit of the age. The aristocratic stiffness of the old *régime* in France is completely mirrored in the brocaded gowns of the eighteenth century. The Republican yet licentious notions of the Directoire find their echo in the plain transparent dresses of the time. Victorian

modesty expressed itself in the multiplicity of petticoats; the emancipation of the post-War flapper in short hair and short skirts. We touch here something very mysterious, as if the Time Spirit were a reality, clothing itself ever in the most suitable garments and rejecting all others. One is almost driven back on the mystical conception of a *Zeitgeist*, who determines for us every detail of our lives, down to gestures, turns of phrase, and even thoughts.[1]

The striking thing about fashions is that they change, and in women's dress this change is so obvious that the word 'fashion' has come to be almost confined to changes in feminine costume. To prove that it should not be so confined is part of the purpose of this chapter, taste and fashion having a much wider range than is always readily admitted. But concerning the changes in women's dress there can be no room for argument.

The middle-aged among us may remember the days when our mothers, about to cross the road, were compelled to relinquish our small hands for a moment in order to gather their voluminous skirts from the ground to prevent them from trailing in the mud. As they did so there was the rustle of innumerable silk petticoats underneath, and even a glimpse of lace frill. Even the youngest can remember the excessively short skirts of 1927. Most of these styles are now so remote from the present day as to leave no doubt in the minds of anyone that fashion has changed. Why does it change?

The old-fashioned moralist's view—a view not quite extinct among the upper clergy—was that fashion changed because women were incurably frivolous and inconstant. "*La donna è mobile.* . . ." But we have seen that fashion's changes are never entirely arbitrary: they always have some inner historical significance, so that the inadequacy of the female character cannot be a complete explanation. Women themselves generally see in fashion's changes an ever-progressing evolution towards something more sensible in the way of dress. Most women, if questioned on this point, will give as their opinion that the fashions of yesterday were indeed ridiculous, and that the fashions of the present day

[1] For a discussion of the philosophic implications of this problem see the present author's "The Triumph of Time," in *Contemporary Essays* (London, 1933).

are both beautiful and practical. Women were probably always of this opinion, and all that can be said about it is that it is a complete delusion. Practicality plays a very minor part in the formation of fashion. If it were not so women would not have worn crinolines in the days when buses and railway carriages were at their very narrowest; nor would they in the nineteen-thirties have groped for brake and accelerator through the confusion of a trailing evening skirt. They would have adopted something like the fashion of 1927, and kept to it for ever. The psychologists have come forward with another explanation, which is probably very much nearer the truth, however unflattering it it may be to the ears of emancipated women.

There are probably now very few among those who have studied the subject of clothes, either from the anthropological or the psychological angle, who hold that the origin of clothing is to be found in the impulse of modesty. It is generally agreed that the main impulse among primitive people comes, on the contrary, from the desire for display, such display consisting in its most primitive forms of a decorative emphasis on those very parts of the body which modesty leads us to hide. Protection, as a motive for clothing, is now relegated to a very minor rôle, and sometimes dismissed as a mere rationalization of a process which has other causes. Even those who still hold that clothing had its origin in modesty are as convinced as their opponents of the sexual significance of bodily coverings of all kind. But such sexual significance has, since men made the great renunciation at the end of the eighteenth century, been confined almost exclusively to female attire.[1] The sexuality of the female body is more diffused than that of the male, and as it is habitually covered up the exposure of any one part of it focuses the erotic attention, conscious or unconscious, and makes for seductiveness. Fashion really begins with the discovery in the fifteenth century that clothes could be used as a compromise between exhibitionism and modesty. The décolletage, however, which arose at this period has been dealt with in another chapter. It is sufficient here to note that the aim of

[1] For a full discussion of these problems see Dr J. C. Flügels' *Psychology of Clothes* (International Psycho-Analytical Library), London, 1930.

fashion ever since has been the exposure of, or the emphasis upon, the various portions of the female body taken in series.

The main fact which emerges from the experiences of nudists in modern times is that while the imaginative contemplation of the naked body may be a highly erotic proceeding, the actual experience is exactly the reverse. It is not a matter of beauty or ugliness, but simply that the eye becomes so accustomed to the naked human body that it ceases to have any meaning to the imagination at all. Since the relaxations of prudery during the last ten years even the costumes of the lighter stage have exhibited the same law; in fact, men have become so used to seeing certain parts of the female body exposed that they no longer get any excitement out of the spectacle at all. In 1900 old gentlemen used to faint when they caught a passing glimpse of a female ankle. The modern young man can contemplate without emotion the entire area of the female leg and a considerable portion of the female stomach. In the nineteen-twenties, for the first time for many hundreds of years, the female leg was exposed to general view. The bust, however, also for the first time for many centuries, was not supposed to exist at all, and women who did not mind in the least exposing their lower limbs would have been embarrassed if called upon to wear a deep décolletage.[1]

In short, the female body consists of a series of sterilized zones, which are those exposed by the fashion which is just going out, and an erogenous zone, which will be the point of interest for the fashion which is just coming in. This erogenous zone is always shifting, and it is the business of fashion to pursue it, without ever actually catching it up. It is obvious that if you really catch it up you are immediately arrested for indecent exposure. If you almost catch it up you are celebrated as a leader of fashion.

Granting, however, that this is an explanation of why fashions

[1] During the rehearsals of *Nymph Errant* at the Adelphi Theatre in 1933 the practice dress of most of the chorus girls consisted of a backless bathing costume. No one thought anything of this—least of all the girls themselves. But the day came for the dress rehearsal, and in one of the scenes it was found that Doris Zinkeisen had devised for the chorus a costume very like the male costume of 1830: tail-coat, trousers, waistcoat, etc. The front of the waistcoat, however, was cut low, so as to form a kind of décolletage. It was not a very startling décolletage—certainly no lower than would have been worn without any embarrassment by an *ingénue* of the eighties when attending her first ball. But there was a strike among the chorus against the indecency of this costume, and Mr Cochran was compelled to fill up the offending gap with gauze.

come in, it is not a complete explanation of why they go out, for in the eclipse of every fashion a large social—one might say snobbish—element is involved. The speeding up of fashion's changes during the last hundred years is due to several causes, chiefly to large-scale production and to the survival of snobbery into a democratic world.

The breakdown of the social hierarchy leaves every woman (for man has ceased to compete) free to dress as well as she can afford, with the result that the only possible superiority is the slight one of cut or material, or the short one of adopting a new fashion a little sooner than her neighbours. The latest creations of the great Paris *couturiers* are copied and duplicated almost as soon as they appear in the shops, so that the fashionable woman is forced to adopt something still newer in order to preserve her advantage. Fashion, in a word, filters steadily down in the social scale. The actual garments which express it become less and less attractive, owing to the use of poorer material and because they are less skilfully made. A fashion, therefore, very quickly becomes dowdy, and this is sufficient to induce women who can afford it to change it as quickly as possible. After a while it becomes worse than dowdy: it becomes hideous, and this may be confirmed by the simple process of showing to any woman a photograph of the dress which she herself wore ten years before.

In fact, the following list might be established. The same costume will be:

Indecent	10 years before its time
Shameless	5 ,, ,, ,, ,,
Outré (daring)	1 year ,, ,, ,,
Smart	
Dowdy	1 year after its time
Hideous	10 years ,, ,, ,,
Ridiculous	20 ,, ,, ,, ,,
Amusing	30 ,, ,, ,, ,,
Quaint	50 ,, ,, ,, ,,
Charming	70 ,, ,, ,, ,,
Romantic	100 ,, ,, ,, ,,
Beautiful	150 ,, ,, ,, ,,

In the race for chic—that is, for contemporary seductiveness—which is the essence of fashion, certain members of the community get left behind. These are either older women, who have given up the struggle, or poor women, women so poor that they cannot afford to struggle at all. That some duchesses are ill dressed, and that some women who are well dressed have not a penny in the bank, does not affect the argument. Contrary to the expectations of Liberal reformers in the nineteenth century, the more you abolish differences of caste and rank, the more desperate does the struggle for chic become, because it is only so that a woman can demonstrate superiority. In Russia for a short time this competition was abolished for sheer lack of materials, but it is apparent from all recent accounts of that country that fashions have already begun to make their return with growing prosperity. The visit of Mme Schiaparelli to Moscow in 1935 would have been quite unthinkable in 1925.

If a woman wishes to look young and rich—and what woman is there who does not desire both?—she must follow the fashion; for the only alternative is the following of a fashion which is already left behind. And this following of the fashion has been made very easy owing to the cheap manufacture of modern women's clothes. Hardly any time now elapses between the launching of a new model and its copying in the cheaper shops, and one of the main problems of the modern fashion-designer is to ensure a little breathing space for his creation in order to reap the financial benefit of it.

Sometimes the cheap manufacturers overleap themselves; a striking case of this was seen a few years ago with the little bowler hat for women, which was in all the cheap shops so quickly that it had no time to establish itself as a fashion, and disappeared in a week. But in general the facility with which clothes conform more or less to the latest fashion, and can be bought by even comparatively poor women, tends for obvious reasons to make fashions change ever more quickly. A similar influence is exerted by the fashion magazines.

The foregoing list shows quite clearly that there is no validity in our judgment concerning fashion until a certain period has elapsed:

in short, there is a gap in appreciation; and it is the thesis of the present chapter that this gap in appreciation is not to be found only in questions of women's dress, but in every other matter of taste.

"There is no disputing about taste," says the Latin tag familiar to every schoolboy; yet few of us would be willing to admit without argument that another man's taste is as good as our own. In point of fact there is and must be a very considerable disputing about taste, and much æsthetic discussion can by its very nature be nothing else. Of course, in every age there is a school of opinion which will not admit that æsthetic values are matters of taste at all. They can, we are told, be deduced from first principles, and this particular opinion was perhaps never so widespread as to-day. There is in the minds of our intellectuals a new thirst for the Absolute, a longing for the supposed certainties of medieval thought, a revival of Thomistic philosophy, so that one of the most highly regarded of our æsthetic mentors can begin a serious study of the arts with the phrase "St Thomas tells us that beauty is that which, being seen, pleases," apparently oblivious of the fact that when St Thomas tells us that he tells us nothing, seeing that the whole point at issue *is*, pleases whom, at what period, and for how long?

It is very difficult for any of us to adopt the view that there are no fixed standards in matters of taste. No one accepts willingly the idea of the relativity of judgment, and even more difficult to admit is the notion of the evolution of belief, especially one's own belief. Most of us believe, subconsciously or not, that from the first there have been true believers and heretics, even in matters of taste. Yet taste, when we study its history, seems to be a fluctuating and changing thing, constantly developing, constantly taking new forms, and these changes in taste are not arbitrary. There are certain laws which appear to govern its development, and its evolution can be plotted.

It is generally agreed that people's taste, good or bad, is shown most clearly in the backgrounds of their lives, in the interiors which they have built up, in the furniture with which they have surrounded themselves, in the rooms they live in. Interior decoration,

in fact, is generally accepted as the test of taste. Let us take a few examples.

Mr and Mrs A. have a maisonette in St John's Wood. They are both cultivated and modern in outlook, and although they have not much money they have succeeded in constructing a very pleasant home for themselves. They have plain distempered walls, straight-lined, open bookcases, chairs comfortable but without any unnecessary upholstery, covered not with flowering cretonnes, but with plain, coarse canvas. Their carpet is self-coloured, harmonizing with the tone of the room. Their lampshades are made of plain sheets of parchment. Their kitchen is all white tiles and labour-saving devices. On their walls they have one picture—a varnished Underground poster. Good taste.

Wealthy Mr B. has a flat in a mews in Mayfair. The style of his interior decoration may be shortly described as Spanish 'baroque.' His walls are completely plain; they may be whitewashed or rough-cast, and his furniture, although extremely complicated in design, has been carefully stripped so as to remove all traces of paint or gilding. He has one or two candelabra of elaborate beaten ironwork, such as may still be seen in Spanish churches. On a side-table he has a vase, containing paper altar flowers, waxed and highly stylized in shape. Once more, good taste.

Miss C. lives with her parents in Hampstead. The house must have been built at the end of the nineteenth century, and was probably decorated when her parents moved into it about 1905. It was then at the height of the fashion. A shelf runs round the heavily panelled walls at two feet above eye-level, and on this shelf reposes a series of art pots. There is an inglenook in the corner, and various built-in settees in the bow windows. Above the Dutch-tiled fireplace is a large sheet of beaten copper, figuring a Dutch windmill and a boat. Above this is a motto which reads, "East—west, home's best," or some similar copybook sentiment in praise of the domestic virtues. The part of the wall which is not covered with panelling is adorned with wallpaper, showing a curious writhing convolvulus pattern. The same *motif*, combined with that of a lady in flowing skirts, can be seen in the lamp standard, while from the middle of the ceiling hangs a beaten copper structure,

with six pendent electric globes, cleverly constructed so as to appear like half-open flowers. Bad taste.

Old Mrs D. lives in an elaborate flat in Hans Crescent. There is a greal deal of furniture, heavily gilded and upholstered in *petit point*. The style might be described as 1890 rococo. There is a good deal of china about, not only on the tables, but in cabinets constructed for the purpose. These cabinets have plate-glass fronts, most expensively cut and bevelled in rococo shape. The carpet is Aubusson, or a very passable imitation thereof. The ceiling has a most elaborate decoration of painted cupids. Bad taste.

Still older Mrs E. has a house in Wimpole Street, and the interior of this represented in its time the last word in high æsthetic culture. In fact, it has probably more right to the name æsthetic than any of the *décors* we have been describing, for it belongs to the age of the original Æsthete. There is a curious gimcrack medievalism about it: carved settees which seem to offer the discomfort of the medieval period without the solidity of its construction. The chairs have an unaccountable look of having been cut out of three-ply. Every room has a different Morris wallpaper. With all respect to the memory of Morris, most of us would be compelled to say "Bad taste."

Still older Mrs F. has a pure Victorian room. We will not pause to describe it in detail, but merely say that it is impossible to see the walls for the multitude of pictures, and impossible to see the furniture for the multitude of photographs scattered upon it. There can be only one verdict: bad taste.

Mr G. is a successful novelist. He prides himself upon being up to the minute. He has furnished a very attractive room entirely with *papier mâché* furniture. Inlaid in the *papier mâché* are Balmoral scenes, with wolves and baying hounds, or else garlands and wreaths of flowers in the taste of the forties. One would hesitate to call it good taste, perhaps, but "definitely amusing—definitely."

Mr H. lives at Brighton, in a Georgian house, which he has filled, after great trouble, entirely with Regency furniture. There is nothing displayed which could not have been there in 1830, except perhaps the ormolu structure supporting the lamp, which

has been transformed with as little alteration as possible to take an electric globe. "Not everybody's taste, you know, but definitely good."

Viscount I., whose family was wealthy in the eighteenth century and has not had a penny since, has a country house some forty miles from London—all Chelsea porcelain and Chippendale furniture. We need not pause to describe it. Definitely good taste.

Mrs J., a rich American widow, has bought the perfect Queen Anne house in Westminster, and has restored it to its pristine condition. Good taste.

If the reader has followed this list of imaginary characters with some attention he will have made a rather curious observation. The good and bad marks are not scattered indiscriminately over the whole list. Instead, they group themselves rather too obviously to escape notice. We have some good ones in the beginning, breaking off sharply into wholly bad ones. Then, after a few more bad ones, we find an indeterminate country between the two, where good taste and bad taste shade off into one another. When we arrive at the eighteenth century we are striking the permanent abode of good taste.

Is this a true grouping, and, if so, has it any meaning? The usual answer, of course, is that the Victorian age was a particularly black spot in the history of taste. The decay of the crafts, we are told, the coming of mass-production in all its branches, Ruskinian Gothic, Pre-Raphaelite medieval snobbism, all combined to produce an age which had, in the strict sense, no taste at all, no sense of fitness, none of that instinct for harmony which was so strong in English decoration and furniture at the end of the eighteenth century. In fact, the explanation of the black patch lies entirely in the peculiar character of the Victorian era.

This is the popular view, but the more one examines the data available the less credible it becomes. For this black patch is not a steady period universally acknowledged and fixed for ever. On the contrary, it is like the shadow of a cloud moving over an expanse of sky. Ten years ago, for instance, it would have been almost impossible to find anyone who was willing to admit that the collection of *papier mâché* furniture inlaid with castles and

moons in mother of pearl was anything but a personal idiosyncrasy. Now the dealers have apparently decided that these things have passed out of the despised category of second-hand into all the glory of the antique. A little earlier it would have been difficult to find anyone who admired Regency furniture. Now an admiration for Regency furniture is almost a test of good taste. It is plain that as we move forward in time the black patch of bad taste moves after us, separated from us always by an almost constant number of years. There is, in short, here, as in matters of dress, a gap in appreciation, and everything that falls into this gap is labelled for a while as bad taste.

If we now compare our results, dress on the one hand and interior decoration on the other, we shall find that though there is in each case a gap, in the case of dress the gap begins nearer to the present style and does not stretch so far back. The black patch ends, shall we say, about 1865. In interior decoration it ends somewhere about 1845.

There is one reason for this which seems so obvious that it can hardly be completely true. While dresses, with most persons of means, are contemporary or at least only six months or a year out of date, most people decorate their houses when they are first married, and not again until their children are grown up. Therefore most people grow up in an interior decoration which is almost a generation before their own. None the less, we can parallel the causes for changes in dress and for changes in furniture, and the result is to promote a certain scepticism as to the finality of any given style.

Most people who take any interest in such matters at all find such scepticism very hard to accept. They are nearly always convinced that the style of interior decoration at which we have just arrived is not merely one item in an endless series, but a final triumph of good taste over bad, and of common sense over stupidity. A few years ago the minds of all those who concern themselves with interior decoration were dominated by the magic word 'functionalism.'

Functionalism meant that nothing was to be useless—the decoration was to be reduced to a minimum: walls should be

bare, the lines of furniture should be straight, the rooms in which we lived should look as much like laboratories or clinics as possible. The doctrine had the curious result also of persuading people that something square was *ipso facto* better than something round, and there were even produced square drinking-glasses and square spoons, the fact being ignored that neither of these two things was as functional as it had been in its traditional form.

The interesting fact is this, that functionalism as a doctrine was most potent about the year 1930, that is to say, when functional dress—very short skirts, straight lines, and bobbed hair—was already passing away in favour of a new style, consisting almost entirely of curves and with a definite flavour of the baroque. It has been plain, also, for the last few years that even in interior decoration the extremely rigid line, the excessive simplicity of functionalism, has been abandoned. Steel furniture, lack of pictures, absence of pattern in carpet and curtains—all these things have been given up in houses with some pretension to contemporary chic in favour of a style full of curves; old pieces of furniture have been unearthed and given places of honour; patterns have returned to furnishing fabrics. In short, interior decoration has already shown exactly the same development as was shown by women's dress between the years 1926 and 1930, but there was a time lag between the development of dress and the development of interior decoration.

If we now turn to architecture we shall find that the time lag is longer still. Many architects are even now putting up what might be described as short-skirted, short-haired buildings. The designers of new flats are still thinking in terms of functionalism, and many of them would assure the inquirer of their firm conviction that the final style in architecture had now been reached, that beauty was to be attained through simplicity, fitness for use and the rest. But this also is a delusion, and if anyone doubts this let him turn to any reliable account of recent artistic movements in Russia. For some years our advanced intellectuals have been pointing to Russia as the place where experiments in a new style could be carried out with the greatest freedom owing to the whole-hearted backing of the Government. We were led to believe that

here the vagaries of fashion had at last been overcome, and the final style discovered suitable for the lives which we were all so shortly to be called upon to lead. For a whole decade it seemed as if the architecture of Russia had set firm like a jelly with a single mould. This was not fashion, we were given to understand—this was permanence, the permanence of the New World.

Alas for such theories! The Russian themselves have been the first to repudiate them. Indeed, it seems that there is only one thing that can make a style permanent, and that is poverty. As soon as Russia began to emerge from the more desperate straits caused, justifiably or not, by the gigantic Communist experiment it began to exhibit all those tendencies towards changes in taste which were supposed to be typical of the corrupt capitalist states of the West. Russia was already in the throes of a neo-Romanticism by the middle thirties. An article which recently appeared in *The Manchester Guardian* on architecture in Soviet Russia had the following significant passage:

> Protests have appeared in sections of the Soviet Press recently against professional and artistic Leftist tendencies. The very forms which for most of the post-Revolutionary years have been hailed abroad as a most striking and significant innovation, in the theatre, in music, in painting, in literature and architecture, are falling now under condemnation. . . . The reaction in the theatre came several years ago when the numerous imitators of the great Soviet experimental *régisseur*, Meyerhold, found themselves pulled up suddenly by a firm rein. . . . The attack has suddenly shifted to architecture. Under the title "Cacophony in Architecture" *Pravda* recalls that the struggle has been carried on for several years against a "vulgar primitivism" which has corrupted the style of Soviet architecture. The attack is clearly directed against the very type of structure which has become most solidly identified abroad with the post-Revolutionary period in Russia.
>
> Melnikoff's best-known work is the Moscow Municipal Workers' Club, finished in grey concrete, a combination of cubes and cylinders. This is now described in *Pravda* as ugly, but for years it has been one of the show places that foreign tourists have been taken to see, and pictures of it have been prominent in every collection of Moscow views. Melnikoff recently submitted a design for the proposed building of a Commissariat of Heavy Industry in Red Square opposite Lenin's tomb and the Kremlin, which calls for sixteen

floors below the surface, forty-one storeys above, with outdoor staircases leading to the topmost storey.

The critic describes these stairways as an absurdity in the snow and zero temperature of a Moscow winter. The western European builders, he says, frequently turn their buildings into joyless, sunless barracks. As a typical example of this he cites the recently opened building of the Commissariat of Light Industry, one of a number in Moscow on which the French architect Corbusier worked during his stay in Russia.

It would seem therefore as if there were no final style in interior decoration and architecture any more than in women's dress, and it would also seem (although the idea must be accepted with some caution) as if the changes in women's dress foreshadowed changes in interior decoration, which in their turn foreshadowed changes in architecture. If this is so, then the fashions we have been considering in the present volume take on a new significance. Fashion, in short, is the spearhead of taste, or rather it is a kind of psychic weathercock which shows which way the wind blows, or even a weathercock with the gift of prophecy, which shows which way the wind will blow to-morrow.

What are these mysterious influences which mould in this fashion the clothes we wear and the very *décor* of our lives? They seem to be the sum at any given moment of human knowledge and human aspirations, the continuers, as it were, on the mental and spiritual plane of that evolution which has borne us from the single-celled creature to man; unconscious, like evolution itself, striving towards they know not what, but providing more than a hint to those who care to embark on the careful study of their vagaries for the plotting of the course of history. It is not suggested that their future course may be prophesied with anything approaching certainty over any long period of time; even the so-called Laws of Logic are here to be used with some discretion: but has not Bergson informed us that the Laws of Logic are only applicable to inanimate objects at rest? Fashion is not an inanimate object, and it is never at rest, a distinction it shares with life itself, of which it seems to be some special and significant manifestation.

Chapter XIX

FASHION AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

NOTHING is more remarkable in the study of Fashion than the ease with which it is possible to pick out the dominating characteristics of a period *if that period is sufficiently remote*, and the difficulty of doing so with contemporary, or almost contemporary, modes. The student finds that he can date a dress of the eighteen-nineties, or even of the nineteen-twenties, to within a year, or half a year, but give him a dress of the nineteen-thirties, and he is lost. The period is too close; he cannot yet pick out the essential line; he cannot see the wood for the trees. It must be a delusion that the dresses of the period from 1930 to the outbreak of the Second World War show no modifications, exhibit no process of evolution, but so it certainly seems.

The nineteen-thirties are, in fact, a period of transition, a preparation, a clearing of the ground for something which never actually happened, because the war intervened and reversed the direction in which Fashion seemed to be going. What that Something was it is perhaps not too fanciful to call a New Victorianism. The frivolous twenties were over, the Bright Young Things were either dead or reformed, or disregarded as ageing eccentrics. There was much talk of "getting back to normal," and among the new normalities was, naturally enough, a normal waist-line. Skirts were much longer—down to the ground for evening, halfway up the calf for day-dresses. Women began to grow their hair again, and now that the universal *cloche* hat had been abandoned a whole new series of hats appeared, alike only in this —that they were all small and perched forward on the head.

Now, on all previous occasions on which the waist has become normal (as, for example, in 1820) it has presaged a return to tight-lacing and, in order to make waists look even smaller, either wide sleeves or voluminous skirts, or both. In the early nineteen-thirties this did not happen. There was a passing vogue for wide sleeves

à la Toulouse-Lautrec, but hips remained obstinately slim. Indeed, the wide sleeves themselves might be said to aim at making the hips rather than the waist look small. There was obviously a contest between the tendency towards tight waists and the tendency towards small hips. We might call the first the Hope of Peace and the second the Fear of War.

It is the whole thesis of this book that Fashion is never arbitrary. It has its roots in the unconscious, the Collective Unconscious if you will, and the hopes and fears of a whole society are reflected in the cut of a dress. In the clothes of the middle thirties there was an element of true prophecy and an element of sheer wishful thinking, and as we came nearer and nearer to the edge of the precipice Fashion had to choose. It chose wishful thinking.

Right up to the last moment the astrologers were prophesying "No war." Right up to the last moment the dress-designers were saying the same thing, in their own language, and saying it with even more conviction. No doubt when time has given us perspective we shall be able to detect many indications of the other point of view. But the broad outlines of development were plain. We were ready for a new Paternalism. Society was about to set hard. The age of economic licence, general promiscuity, and female emancipation was over. Tight-lacing could not long be delayed.

Let us take a glimpse at the fashion magazines of the period just before the Munich Crisis. The fashion scouts came back from the Paris summer collections of 1938 with various exciting items of news. Hair was to be "done up on top, screwed into that ready-for-the-bath-look that all Paris has now." That meant a somewhat naked look round the neck, so jewellery was coming in again. All the costumiers, it appeared, had agreed on really short day dresses, and some of them had gone in for authentic leg-of-mutton sleeves. If this mode had really managed to establish itself we should have had a complete replica of the eighteen-thirties. But, unlike the hats of that period, those of 1938 were still small, absurdly small, and tilted over the nose.

Even evening dresses were to be provided with headgear—"like your grandmother's bonnet"—and, in an even more drastic attempt to revive the past, Schiaparelli invented "eight-button-boots

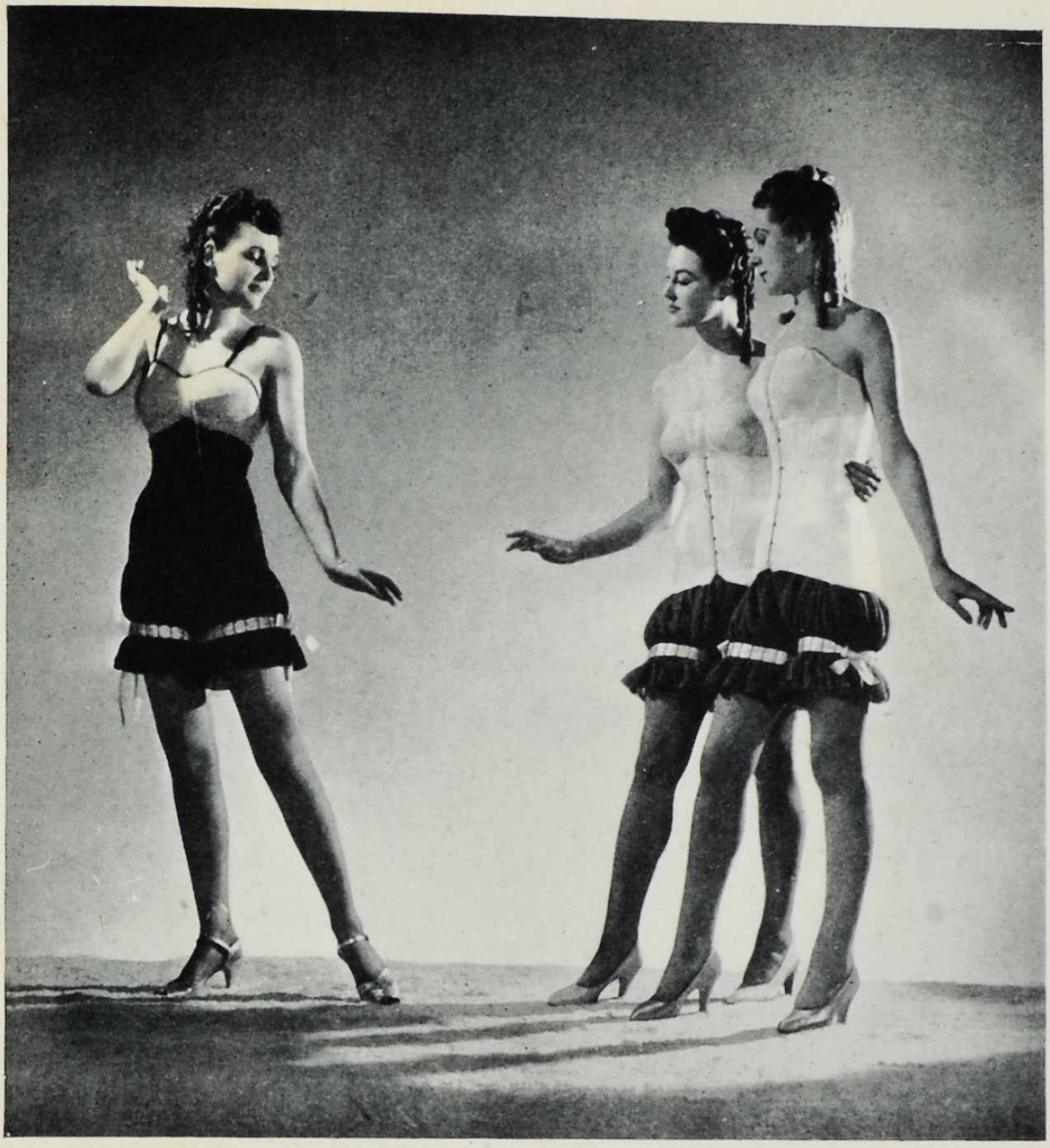
for evening, in coloured kid." But this eccentricity found few followers. The erotic-æsthetic of the shoe was too firmly established.

The dress-designers, plundering the past, seemed to be endeavouring to combine the eighteen-sixties with the nineteen-hundreds. "A huge crinoline, which logically, should have chignon and mittens to complete the picture, is now given an impertinent tuft of feathers sprouting from a curly top-knot, and tied on with a scarlet velvet band beneath the chin." The prevalent colour was mauve or violet—"immodest violet," the dress-commentators called it, with a more than usually frank admission of the underlying purpose of fashion.

But the most important symptom could be seen in those related features of the new models—the bunched or 'peasant' skirt, and the first hint of a corset. These two seemingly disparate objects really represented the same tendency; they both pointed from different angles at a new conception of woman, at the end of the woman-as-comrade ideal which had reigned ever since the emancipation of the First World War. Perhaps it is hardly necessary to add that the peasant skirt in question was an *Austrian* peasant skirt. It was the faint but unmistakable echo of Hitler's "Kirche, Kinder, Küche!"

The Spirit of Fashion, however, can never will the complete subjection of women; it merely wished to use restrictions as a new seduction after exhausting the erotic possibilities of liberty. And the symbol of all feminine restrictions is, quite naturally, the corset. Just after the Royal Visit to Paris in 1938 *Vogue* came out with a leading article.

> This autumn [it said], besides a royal grace and splendour, Paris has decreed a new woman to fit their new mode. Perhaps they have sensed that growing ennui which has attended so much freedom, so much frankness, and above all, so much flesh. . . . The new woman must be mysterious, alluring, witty: a personality rather than a beauty. She will be vested and gloved and corseted—and even button-booted! There must be frou-frou and femininity; restraints and rendezvous. . . . There is a delicious excitement about these new clothes, for in them woman is rediscovering herself, her personality, and her sex.



MANNEQUINS CHEZ LACHASSE, EARLY 1939

Reproduced by courtesy of "Vogue"

A later article told the world of women that "the era of varnished chic is over . . . brittle modernity is quite dead . . . Grandmother was right." And why was Grandmother right? Because "she concentrated on slimming her waist." Doubtful readers were assured that it was quite easy—"most women have slender waists"—and were implored not to worry unduly about their hips.

In a word, it looked for a moment as if the emancipated ideal of slender hips which had kept tight-lacing at bay for so long was about to be abandoned. There can be little doubt that tight-lacing would have been in again *if there had been no war.*

Those engaged in the luxury trades, particularly in Paris, had managed to persuade themselves that there would not be. True, they had had the fright of Munich, but had not M. Daladier brought back, if not Peace with Honour, at least Peace? And so the influences we have been considering flowed on all the merrier for the slight check, and the principal fashion houses seem to have been unanimous in their determination to bring in tight-lacing, real tight-lacing, in the spring of 1939.

In London, Lachasse, having displayed his slim-waisted collection, sent his mannequins out in corsets—and bloomers. He called it "giving the game away." "But the game's up unless you have the new figure—the figure of eight which the new clothes demand; so get it, by hook, by crook, or by corset. And add bloomers, by way of bravado." Making allowance for the exuberance of fashion journalists, we must admit that this was no less than the truth.

By the summer of 1939 the fun had grown furious. *Vogue*'s reporter noted:[1]

> The Paris Collections are an old-fashioned variety show. Molyneux's hoop-flared day skirts walk beside Lanvin's modern peg-topped, hobble skirts; Balenciaga's wide Velasquez panniers dance past Paquin's tightly wrapped mummy skirts; Schiaparelli's full, Turkish harem, angle-length evening dresses vie with her own slim 1880 bustle-backed skirts; Molyneux's plastered-to-the-figure bodices for day contrast with Chanel's softly slurred ones. . . . Nothing varies more than silhouette. You can look as different from your neighbour as the moon from the sun—and both of you are right. The only thing

[1] I should like, in passing, to pay a tribute to *Vogue*'s extremely well-informed and intelligent reporting, without which it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to recapture the fevered atmosphere of the period just before the Second World War.

that you must have in common is a tiny waist, held in if necessary by super-lightweight boned and laced corsets. There isn't a silhouette in Paris that doesn't cave in at the waist.

The advertisers hastened to join in the dance. "Wasp waists are here!" they clamoured. "Note at the right the model *with concealed back lacing*! For lacing is actually here! Already it is nipping inches off waistlines! And brassières help by boosting bosoms high, making waists seem still slimmer!" Certainly one can say things in advertisements which seem almost indecent in the cold print of a sober treatise. As summer drew to an end the manufacturers were promising women "an old-fashioned boned, laced corset, made, by modern magic, light and persuasive as a whisper." "Control it with corsets," they cried. "Where there's a will there's a waist!"

How strange it all seems, in retrospect! To tell a woman of 1944 that she might easily (Hitler and history permitting) have had a wasp-waist and even, perhaps, a crinoline, is to invite incredulity. Women have very short memories in these matters. They will never admit that they really liked any recently past fashion, still less a fashion that just failed to establish itself. Many women have no 'sense of period,' especially of a period that is only just over. Like Gertrude Stein, they are the creators of a "Perpetual Present." It is at once their charm and their limitation.

At this point the feminine reader may be inclined to exclaim with impatience, "Well, you have told us what didn't happen. Now tell us what did happen!" Alas, that is not quite so easy. It is always difficult to pick out the essential line of contemporary styles, and it is particularly difficult to do so in war-time. Conflicting tendencies do battle with one another. Clothes which, in peace-time, would have been discarded, are made to do duty for a little longer; the launching of new modes is hampered by the lack of materials and the shortage of labour. War is always a period of transition. But of transition to what?

The War was unwelcome, particularly in France, and to the dress-designers who had been moving steadily towards the more formal modes we have been discussing it was the most unwelcome of all. They were quick to see that the trend towards tight-lacing

could not be continued. We find admissions in the fashion journals that the return of the corset could not now be expected. In the words of one of them, "the foundation garment, built for comfort, with occasional modified boning for support, returned." For the rest, the *modistes* were stunned. The War had been so long feared, but never really expected. Now it was upon them, and for the first few months they did not know what course to take.

However, by the spring of 1940 Paris had settled down not uncomfortably to this new kind of war—the war in which nothing happened. Safe behind the Maginot Line, the rhythm reasserted itself, the great fashion houses displayed their mid-season collections. True, there were four mannequins instead of fifteen, and thirty models instead of a hundred, but there were plenty of buyers, for many of the smart cosmopolitans had crowded into Paris. In Februaryit was recorded that "they're all dining gracefullyagain, in skirts that touch their toes."

In March all the great Paris houses launched their collections. The French Government even released designers on special leave, and their creations were as magnificent as ever, although an acute observer might have noticed that the dresses fell into two categories: those that were aimed at the American market, and those which were designed for the slightly more subdued mood of London and Paris. Even these seemed to have been created on the assumption that the war was slightly unreal or, at all events, that it would never cross the Rhine. There were even, sandwiched among the fashion plates, articles on holidays in France—"but you must remember that the *Zone des Armées* covers a good deal of the eastern and north-eastern part of the country."

The *Zone des Armées* was shortly to include the whole of France. The illusion of "Business as usual," apparently inevitable at the beginning of any war, was finally dispelled. England was cut off from the Continent as completely as during the Napoleonic Wars.

People in this country had very little notion, until D-day, of the development of fashion in France during the war years. The Germans made every effort to win over artists of all kinds, and especially fashion designers. Some of them yielded to pressure, and the clothes they designed were marked by an extreme exaggeration

of those tendencies which we have been discussing, tendencies which would only have reached their full development if the German New Order had really been established.

After the liberation it was said that the extravagant fashions of the war years had been designed with the express object of making the German Frau ridiculous. This is very ingenious but hardly convincing. Rather, these fashions represented the wishful thinking of the collaborationists; but, whatever the motives behind them, they are unlikely to have much influence on the clothes of the immediate future. No doubt the influence of Paris will reassert itself, but not along these lines. For the moment, however, we are concerned with development of British fashions after the collapse of France.

One thing was certain. The French export trade was dead, and a far-sighted effort was made to capture at least part of it for the British designers and for those Paris houses—such as Molyneux, Paquin, and Worth—which had managed to get away. Fashions designed in London showed the same cleavage as in Paris before the collapse. Extravagant and even *outré* gowns were designed for America, especially South America, and much simpler styles offered for home consumption. This cleavage was made even more obvious by the Government's policy of calling in some of the best British dress houses to design "Utility" garments. But the growing shortage of materials condemned a large portion of the public to make do as far as possible with old clothes.

It is, in fact, extremely difficult to plot any drastic change in the general appearance of women's clothes during the later war years. Skirts were already short before 1939; they have remained so. The *robe de style* has, of course, disappeared. Slacks, which were already worn before the War, have been worn more frequently, but are still not very common. The square-toed, wedge-heeled shoe is no novelty. Hats have retained most of their peace-time characteristics, being still small and pushed forward over the forehead. There has been a considerable increase in the use of the turban, and many of the younger women go bareheaded.

Contrary to what might have been expected, hair has not become short. Even in uniform many women have clung to the

'little girl' style of hair reaching to the shoulders. Considering the difficulties of war-time hairdressing, we must admit that *coiffures* are still surprisingly elaborate. Silk stockings have disappeared, but there has been an immense improvement both in cotton and artificial silk stockings. The offensive shininess of the latter in the early thirties has disappeared, and so the revolution is less noticeable than it might otherwise have been. In summer nearly all young women go without stockings altogether. But these are details. The general silhouette shows very little change.

The truth seems to be that war has a delayed-action effect on fashion, and this is so because it is not war itself that really matters, but the social upheaval that it brings in its train. We have already considered in earlier parts of the book the two most conspicuous examples of such social upheaval during the last century and a half—the period immediately following the French Revolution and the decade after the First World War. What counts is the redistribution of wealth and the change in the status of women.

It will be readily admitted that the social upheaval which may be expected to follow the Second World War will be more far-reaching than that which followed the First. In this war women have attained (if equality is what they desire) their most striking triumph: the liability to be conscripted for national service. They have also attained a degree of economic independence undreamed of even in 1918. More young women have more money to spend as they like than ever before in the history of mankind. Naturally, much of it will be spent upon clothes, and although the exact form of those clothes may be difficult to prophesy, yet if there is anything at all in the theories set forth in this book it should be possible to lay down certain fundamental principles which are likely to determine the main lines of future development.

Basing ourselves on the analogy of the periods following the last war and the French Revolution, we may with some confidence suggest that the fashions of the immediate future (say for the ten years following the peace) will be young fashions. They will be designed to display the grace of the juvenile figure. It is not certain that skirts will be short or that busts will be flat. Neither happened after the French Revolution, but it seems extremely

likely that clothes will be scanty either in cut or texture or both. It is highly improbable that the waist will be in its normal place, and, as the memory of the low waists of the twenties is still recent, the waistline is more likely to be high than low. It is quite certain that tight-lacing has been postponed for a generation.

The colour of post-war clothes raises a special problem. After the last war women wore beige for a whole decade. In an earlier chapter we have called it "the ghost of khaki," and those who think such a description fanciful are able to point to the fact that it was the inferior quality of fabrics which made it impossible to experiment with the brighter colours of the dye-vat. It may even be that there was so much khaki dye in the world that manufacturers had no alternative but to go on using it, suitably diluted, until it was all exhausted.

Similar conditions will no doubt prevail after the present war, and, if this were all, we might well see a repetition of the long reign of beige. But these completely rationalist explanations are never the whole truth in such a complex matter as the history of fashion. Colours have a psychological meaning, and it may be that the dominating shade of women's dress in the immediate future will be some kind of diluted Air Force blue.

On the other hand, it may be that the quality of fabrics will make a quick recovery, and that the activities of a body like the British Colour Council may do something to bring back the vivid tints which most women, if asked now, during the drabness of war, would say they looked forward to in the immediate future. Yet there does seem to be some mysterious influence at work which, after any great social upheaval, tends to level colours down to a pale uniformity. *Qui vivra verra!*

What about hats? The lunatic hats of the thirties, which have so strangely persisted into the war epoch, are almost certainly doomed. After the French Revolution there was a long period of turbans wrapped round short hair. After the First World War there was a whole decade of the *cloche*, the form of which made anything but very short hair impossible. The hats of the thirties, beginning with the moment when Schiaparelli stuck a sock on her head and called it a hat, represented a violent reaction, a

positive debauch of fantasy. This is very unlikely to continue, and if there is anything in our theories at all the hats of the next ten years will be stereotyped in form and so close-fitting as to impose a small and neat *coiffure*. It is interesting, in this connexion, to note that already before the end of the war some of the leading American fashion journals were beginning to write about "the neat little head." The tendency of women to cut off their hair in such periods as the one which will follow the Peace is too well established to make it possible to doubt what the general line of development will be.

But when we make these prognostications, confidently or otherwise, let us hasten to add that they may all be falsified by social, political, or economic events which elude our prophesying. The modes of the past can be plotted with scientific accuracy. The fashions of the future are incalculable, precisely because Fashion is an Art. The great pictures of the Old Masters may prove, when analysed, to have been constructed on certain very definite mathematical principles; their main masses may be related to one another, with almost pedantic accuracy, in terms of the Golden Section or some other formula, but it is highly improbable that the great artists went to work in this way when they were planning their masterpieces. Art is alive, and life eludes all the devices of mensuration. Fashion too is alive, and to prophesy its future development is one of the most fascinating problems—and one of the most dangerous. All we can say is that when, a hundred years hence, the fashions which followed the Second World War come to be studied, they will be seen to take their inevitable place in the long process and to be completely in tune with the Spirit of the Age.

INDEX

Colour and Caricature

I. TRANSPARENT PIECES

(*Etching and aquatint*)

This caricature, published in 1799, shows the extremely flimsy dresses of the period, consisting of little more than one thin muslin garment. All the elaborate materials and rich embroideries of the eighteenth century have been abandoned, corsets and petticoats have been discarded, and women walk about in what they fondly imagine to be the costume of ancient Greece—or as near an approach to it as climate and decency will allow. The huge muffs enable the ladies to keep at least their hands warm.

II. THE THREE GRACES

(*Engraving*)

This beautiful engraving of the end of the Empire is not a fashion-plate, and certainly does not represent the costume of any one year. Rather, the artist has taken the well-known group of "The Three Graces" and clothed them according to his fancy, giving them the 'classical' line of the first decade of the century, but hinting at two influences which were later to transform it—the Turkish, or Near-Eastern influence, and the Walter Scott influence, the frills and ruffs of the late sixteenth century. It was these which were to dominate the fashions of the Restoration.

III. A SNUG BERTH IN A SHOWER

(*Etching*)

This caricature by Cruikshank ridicules the extravagant modes of the early eighteen-thirties, in particular the excessive size of the hats. These had become mountains of ribbons and feathers, and were worn on all occasions, even for dinner-parties and at the theatre. The men wear white trousers and pinched-in, short frock-coats, together with the inevitable tall hat. They also display a fine crop of the new 'Romantic' whiskers.

IV. HERE HE COMES!

(Lithograph)

Lithography, in the early thirties, was just coming into popular favour, and its soft, delicate touch lent itself admirably to the feeling of a period when Romanticism was beginning to turn into Sentimentality. Here is the "little woman" of the age, with her tiny slippered feet, her puffed sleeves, her narrow waist, her ample petticoats, and the chaste seductiveness of her décolletage. Here is the progenitor of all music titles for the next fifty years.

V. TAKING THE BENEFIT OF THE ACT

(Lithograph)

The Act in question is probably the Marriage Act of 1836, which permitted marriage by licence without publication of banns. It is interesting to note that the bride is wearing a décolleté dress; this custom persisted until the late forties. The bridegroom is wearing the costume which was afterwards to stereotype itself as evening dress—cut-away coat and waistcoat cut low to display the frilled shirt. But the fashion of universal black is still in the future.

VI. THE LAST EMBRACE

(Lithograph)

This affecting print was probably made in the year of Queen Victoria's accession or perhaps the year before. The fallen, baggy sleeve is very characteristic, and so are the low-necked dress and the Stuart curls falling softly along the cheek. The departing lover seems to be wearing a high black stock with very little linen showing, a coloured waistcoat, and a short frock-coat. His side-whiskers are the very height of contemporary fashion.

VII. "WATER"

THE BENEFIT OF CRINOLINE, AND PRESERVATION OF LIFE

(*Lithograph*)

The date is 1859, when the crinoline had reached its most extravagant dimensions, and this is one of innumerable prints issued to exploit at once its humour and its charm. Its interest as a social document lies in the glimpse it affords of almost every detail of contemporary dress. We see the outer skirts, the crinoline structure itself, the lace-edged linen underclothes, the white stockings (they were sometimes red), and the little elastic-sided boots. Note also the characteristic sleeves of the period and the absurd little parasol.

VIII. THE SEWING-MACHINE

(*Etching*)

This fashion-plate of the very early seventies throws a flood of light on the complicated fashions of the next decade. The sewing-machine had emerged from the experimental stage and had become available in the home. In the dress-making establishments the labour of the seamstress was lightened, and a positive orgy ensued of fitting bits together, making dresses of several kinds of material, cutting out sections and replacing them with pieces of a different colour, and adding a riot of elaborate trimmings. The ladies in the plate have hardly yet got into their stride, but their dresses certainly do not err on the side of simplicity.

IX. LES VÉLOCIPÉDEUSES

(*Lithograph*)

This amusing caricature of 1870 long antedates the days when women really did take to the bicycle. The machine shown is the velocipede, or 'bone-shaker,' which was beginning to come into use at the end of the sixties, to be replaced in the early seventies by the slightly less laborious 'penny-farthing.' No woman, certainly no woman of the type shown, could have worked the velocipede. The artist is indulging in fantasy, but his work is none the less revealing.

X. TOILETTE DE COURSES

(Lithograph)

This beautiful fashion-plate is taken from *La Mode Artistique* for March 1878. It represents the rather graceful, smooth-hipped period between the two bustles—that of the early seventies and that of the middle eighties. The long, trailing skirt is characteristic, and was worn on almost all occasions both indoors and out. It must have been very cumbersome and not very hygienic. In this sporting outfit there is an amusing echo of masculine dress—in the cuffs and the collar and tie.

XI. PALAIS DE GLACE

(Lithograph)

This famous poster by Jules Chéret is dated 1896, and gives a vivid notion not only of the new art which was then transforming the hoarding of Paris into a public picture-gallery, but of the typical dress of the mid-nineties, with its tight waist, its full skirt, its blouse-like bodice with a cascade of lace. The enormous sleeves of the period are hidden by the little cape, which, with its characteristic collar, recalls the photographs of Sarah Bernhardt and the drawings of Beardsley.

XII. VANISHED SPRING

(Stencil Print)

It is impossible to look upon the fashions of the late nineteen-twenties (this, for example, of 1927) without prejudice. The 'gap in appreciation' still works, and if anyone is asked to-day what he (or more certainly she) thinks of them, the reply is almost sure to be "Hideous!" Certainly they look absurd enough with their low waists, their denial of all the curves of the female body. They belong to a post-war epoch. Another such is now upon us, and it is dangerous to be too superior.

Transparent Pieces

The Three Graces

A SNUG BERTH IN A SHOWER

Pub by J. McLean 26 Haymarket

Here He Comes !

Taking the Benefit of the Act

The Last Embrace

"*Water*"

The Benefit of Crinoline, and Preservation of Life

The Sewing-machine

Les Vélocipédeuses

Toilettes de Courses

CHAMPS-ELYSÉES

Palais de Glace

Vanished Spring