

THE GARB OF OUR GRANDMOTHERS.

PART I.

La mode est un perpétuel recommencement, said a witty French writer, but the women of the earlier years of the present century stepped back to the classic ages for the models on which to form their dresses. France set the example. With the downfall of the Monarchy and the establishment of the first Republic, a wave of fantastic dressing clothed the women of Paris in the garb of Roman matrons, English women following in their footsteps, with certain reservations and altered details.

A tax on hair-powder at the rate of a guinea per person had, in 1794, brought the elaborate wigs of the Georgian period into disfavour, and on the disappearance of the greased and powdered masses with which women had been wont to disfigure their heads, the voluminous skirts and high-heeled shoes were also cast aside, to be replaced by sandals, clinging robes of soft material, and a hundred extravagant modes of dressing the hair. Of the last, that



of wearing enormous feathers, which held popular favour for some years was the most ridiculous, and yet, notwithstanding the constant attacks made upon it by the newspapers—the *Times* amongst them—the century was a year or two old before the leaders of fashion saw fit to discontinue its use.

Thus the *Times* of the day waxes caustic:—

“At all elegant assemblies, there is a room set apart for all lady visitants to put their feathers on, as it is impossible to wear them in any carriage with a top to it. The lustrres are also removed upon this account, and the doors are carried up to the height of the ceiling. A well-dressed lady, who nods with dexterity, can give a friend a little tap upon the shoulder across the room, without incommoding the dancers.”

And again on the following day in the same paper—“A young lady, only ten feet high, was overset in one of the late gales of wind, in Portland Place, and the upper mast of her feather blown upon Hampstead Hill.”

The distinguishing characteristic of the dress for nearly twenty years was the high waist, so high indeed was it that gowns were made all in one. They had no sleeves,



the arms being bare save for narrow straps at the shoulders, these being elaborately embroidered and worked, whilst capes and collarettes provided a questionable protection against cold, when the fair wearers walked abroad. The high waist—copied from the Court of Napoleon—came in for a full share of ridicule in the public prints. Amongst the most quoted was a parody on a song much sung in the early years of the century, “Shepherds, I have lost my love.” It ran—

“Shepherds I have lost my waist,
Have you seen my body?”

* * * * *

Never shall I see it more,
Till, common sense returning,
My body to my legs restore,
Then shall I cease from mourning.”

Sometimes gaudily-coloured caps entirely covered the head, being fastened underneath the chin with straps of ribbon; sometimes the hair was dressed in the Greek fashion, sometimes it was worn in curls which fell completely over the face, hiding the eyes and making it difficult for the devotees of fashion to see clearly. For a brief space in 1801, the scanty skirts, short in front and long behind,



became a little fuller, but the change was only transitory, for in the next year they were even scantier than before, and scarcely reached to the ankles. It was now that the “crop” or “Titus” fashion of hair-dressing led the more extravagant-minded women to cut their hair close to the head, shorter than a man’s. With arms, neck, and bosom bare, skirts reaching only a little below the knee, and short hair, the fashionable dames of the time must have cut a sorry figure. Happily its aggressive ugliness rendered the craze a fleeting one, but it had the effect of making a severe style of dress *de rigueur* for several months.

This burst of imitation of Franco-Roman ideals is most traceable in the portraits of the period in which the beauties of the day are usually shown sitting on a rock, a lyre between their hands, their eyes cast heavenward, in place of posing on a sofa in languid would-be classical postures as they would have done a year or two earlier.

Immediately treading upon the heels of the



Roman craze, came a reaction in favour of a later period, Stuart ruffs and caps striking inharmonious notes with the simple and severe lines of the tight dresses of muslin or thin silk, as well as being entirely out of keeping with the narrow silk scarf which hung loosely upon the shoulders, and was kept in position by its ends being wound round either arm just above the elbow. Then sleeves suddenly appeared, being sufficiently long to completely cover the hands, and with them a close-fitting lace cap in imitation of the coif was adopted, malicious tongues said, by those whose heads had not yet recovered from the shearing process of the “Titus.” But before this time the famous Spencer had made its *début* with instant success, being followed quickly by saques, negligées, and the capote or great coat, which was the favourite dress of Queen Charlotte. Perhaps it was only in this single instance that the Queen of George III. set a fashion to her Court, for with her approval of the capote, it became the rage. The brilliant Madame D’Arblay, writing of the Queen’s predilection for this ugly garment, says—

“The garb of state she inly scorn’d,
Glad of its trappings to be freed;
She saw thee humble, unadorn’d,
Quick of attire, a child of speed.”

The ladies of fashion, however, soon out-passed the domesticated and home-loving Queen, enlarging the capote to such a degree



that it was exactly like a man's coat with a velvet collar. To complete the picture, round, black, beaver hats, silk cravats, and boots with high military heels were worn with this garment, a sprigged lace veil, and the petticoat peeping from below the long coat alone showing the weaker sex. This curious passion for imitating men's dress has burst forth anew comparatively recently, but it proved as reprehensible and as ineffectual as in the days when the Regency belles copied the attire worn by the dandies who fluttered around them. A portrait of a lady, at this time, in driving-dress is more eloquent of the follies committed in the name of fashion, than all the lampoons and gibes which fell with the thickness of autumn leaves from the printing-press. She is wearing a box-coat, and cape, a round white beaver hat lined with green silk, a white cravat, and Hessian boots; the coat is open, showing the costume beneath—a cambric dress, cut as low at the neck as our ordinary evening dress, and fitting close to the body, without any pleat in the skirt, and gored in such a manner as to disclose the lines of the figure. These thin robes were even damped in order that they should cling more closely to their wearers as they dried; and the lighter the clothing the more it was admired.

For nine years the vagaries of fashion hovered round the minor details of costume, the ground-work, so to speak, remaining practically the same; but in 1809, the turban, and a long, close-fitting dress suggested by a man's overcoat, tightly buttoned from top to bottom, made more or less successful bids for



the favour of the fickle. The turban, however, won the battle in the end, and was to be seen on every female head and with every kind of costume. It was a curiously shaped cap, fitting close upon the forehead over which was rolled, without the slightest regard to shape or proportion, many yards of linen or silk of eastern manufacture. A jewelled aigrette or a feather was negligently stuck amongst the folds, individual fancy running riot with this as with all other articles of dress.

Under the names of "Turkish Bonnet," "Ottoman," and "Rebecca"—after Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, published in 1819—the turban fulfilled its mission of disfigurement until the Turks fell into disrepute, and Greeks and things Grecian enlisted the patronage of the day. It had only been worn for dinners, for the theatre, and official receptions, very rarely for walking, and was, therefore, greatly missed when deposed from its high position, hence Greek coronets and ringlets were speedily displaced by one of the longest-lived of all the creations of the time—the toque.



This was another imitation of the Parisian milliners, described as being like "a huge pie, with battlements of plumes and a tassel of silk falling on the shoulder." It took a thousand forms, but was originally copied from the ceremonial head-covering of the officers in the Imperial Army of France, and although made of handsome materials, was never other than a monstrosity and a monument of bad taste.

Queen Charlotte set the example of wearing simple stuffs, except on State occasions, and for many years poplins, cambrics, and muslins were the staple materials from which ordinary dresses were made. But the thoughtless prodigality and barbaric extravagance of the ladies of the new French nobility, created by Napoleon I., had a remarkable effect upon Englishwomen; and about 1812 brocades, silks, and satins, came into daily and constant use; the dresses were less scanty, but the high-waisted form still prevailed, as well as the thin sandals of silk which were now fastened with crossed straps reaching some distance above the ankles. At the same time the bodice and skirt were made in two separate pieces, the former consisting of little else than a pair of sleeves,

generally made of different coloured material to the skirt. With these costumes, beaver hats, uncompromisingly square in shape, and plastered with huge rosettes, were considered most correct; but the close of 1815 may be justly considered as the beginning of the bonnet era, which will be dealt with in a second article.

Only the more noticeable and *bizarre* of the modes of the moment have been touched upon here, for fashions changed from week to week with even more bewildering rapidity than in these latter days, and it would be a matter of impossibility to describe them all. Their extravagances were at no time in our history more caricatured than in the first twenty years of the century, the *Times* leading the way in lampoon and gibe; and those whose youth had been spent in the artificial and courtly atmosphere of the days of hoop and hair-powder, of beauty-spots and of rouge, bitterly decried the license in dress, which they argued, and argued only too rightly, begot a corresponding license in manners. One old gentleman of the *ancien régime*, writing on the decline of womanly dignity in the year 1812, said, "I know to-day no woman in society who can sit, or smile, greet a friend, or listen to a conversation with any degree of grace."

A sweeping indictment, but one unfortunately true in almost every statement. Society, then, had not awakened to its manifold duties, and consequently spent its superfluous energies in prosecuting the art of absurd dressing.

(To be continued.)



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PART II.

It was not until 1820 that the high waist began to disappear. The old spirit, which had found its expression during the major part of



the eighteenth century in the passing of gowns from mother to daughter, and in the possession of few dresses, still left its mark upon the



salient features of fashion. A gradual revolt against the habit of leaving the bosom and arms uncovered during the daytime set in in



1816, brought about, it is said, by the warnings of the physicians, who attributed an increase of consumption and other pulmonary diseases to the recklessness and foolhardiness of scanty clothing. Then the leaders of fashion went to the other extreme, wearing long



sleeves that covered the hands, and muffling up their necks in the Elizabethan ruff.

During the next two years the incessant change of costume was not so great, but in 1818 the overcoat à la militaire enjoyed a brief popularity, the heaviness of day attire



being compensated by the lightness of the evening dresses, which were so short, that they reached only a little below the knee.



Up to this time, whatever the fashion, dresses had been remarkable for their lack of ornamentation, but now they grew gradually fuller,



founces crept slowly up the skirt, increasing in number, to be discarded in 1827, when the fashion-plates showed the mode to be almost





identically similar to that of the present day, with the sole exception of the hat, which was ridiculously extravagant in shape and size—not unlike an inverted basket.

In the following year the famous *gigot* sleeves made their appearance, introduced, it was declared, by a great lady of France, who, short of stature, appeared top-heavy when wearing the enormous erections decreed by the milliners. The effect of these sleeves certainly served to equilibrate the appearance, until as much material was used in their manufacture



as in that of the dress itself; then the coal-scuttle bonnet, in all its hideousness, claimed the errant fancy of the fair, and *gigot* sleeves passed into the limbo of things forgotten, to be revived in more recent days.

And now a word on bonnets. They had their birth in the years between 1815 and 1830, and have never yet been wholly deposed from feminine favour, despite the innumerable forms they have taken. At first they completely enshrouded the face, being tied with broad ribbons under the chin; then they became of enormous size, covered with tufts of marabout



feathers, and rising as high on the top as the crest of a head-piece. After 1825 they were described by a contemporary writer as "scaffolds of silk" and "majestic monuments of millinery." One of their most popular shapes was the *gipsy*, which reached such ridiculous lengths that a caricaturist of the time suggested the making of worn-out umbrellas into this particular kind of bonnet, the *Times* saying by



way of comment, "The transition is so easy that he is scarce to be praised for the invention."

The poet Moore thus described the fashionable bonnet—

"That build of bonnet whose extent,
Should, like a doctrine of dissent,
Puzzle church doors to take it in—
Nor half had reached that pitch sublime
To which true toques and berets climb,
Leaning, like lofty Alps, that throw
O'er minor Alps their shadowy sway,
Earth's humble bonnets far below,
To poke through life their famous way."



The massive *coiffure*, interwoven with ribbons, and of a fantastic height, needed a massive covering which recalled the impossible shakos of the foot-soldiers of Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, and with these bonnets shawls from Persia, and the Levant, all styled "cashmere," were worn in the form of cloaks.

With 1830 more sensible and warmer dressing was the habit; women no longer went about as they had done even in the coldest weather, their arms scarcely covered, the throat open, and the feet protected only by silk stockings and thin sandals, the energies spent upon elaborate changes of fashion being transferred to the hair, which was dressed in



every imaginable kind of manner. Of these the ugliest was the so-called Chinese style, in which a broad plait surmounted the head, forming a kind of basket which held a quantity of roses and feathers, the whole sometimes interlaced with strings of jewels or glittering beads. Another hideous mode of adorning the head was to strain the hair away from the face so tightly that it was almost impossible to move the skin upon the forehead or close the



eyes, whilst a long ringlet fell down the side of the face corresponding in size to the pendant ear-rings then worn; this was only equalled in point of ugliness by the fashion of wearing two enormous plaits of hair standing upright upon the head, one slightly crossing the other, the hair at either side being elaborately curled.

In the matter of colours our grandmothers were totally ignorant of the "art shades"



which give a *piquant* interest to modern feminine dress. Primary colours in all their native crudity were the joy and delight of the hearts which beat under the high-waisted dresses of the later Georgian days. Greens and yellows of aggressive density were worn together with cheerful ignorance of the canons of art; red feathers were added to these, and the more inharmonious the whole effect, the greater the success of the costume. Naturally a vulgar display of jewellery accompanied the lack of taste in colour, but the topaz was for nearly fifty years the most favourite precious stone used in the ornamentation of ear-rings, a remnant of barbarity which appealed to society of all classes.

To the student of matters sumptuary the first thirty years of the nineteenth century have an interest, which at first sight does not seem to be of any great value. But it was a period when mighty forces were at work, leavening the social lump slowly but surely,

when amidst a licence in dress only to be equalled by the licence of the Restoration, there suddenly sprang into being a new code of public and of private life, which has only been strengthened by the passage of later decades. Naturally the first result of the leaven of public opinion was excess—the froth of reaction. In the heavy wigs and voluminous skirts of the powder period women perforce were slow, if not dignified, of movement, and careful in bearing, but in lighter garb they lost the courtliness and stateliness of the eighteenth century, and in so doing lost much of the outward respect which is their due. A brief period of folly ensued, when extravagance surmounted extravagance, and when the evil example set by the new nobility of the First Empire, and the women crowned queens by Napoleon Buonaparte, was slavishly followed; but it lasted, comparatively speaking, only a short time, by reason of its fierceness and fever, and with its gradual cessation women

began to find nobler and more useful channels for their energies than in following the vagaries of irresponsible fashion-makers for the moment.

Compared with the woman of sixty years ago, the woman of to-day is a being whose superiority is beyond question. Dress certainly still holds a high place in her affections, but it is not the blind, unreasoning devotion which led her grandmother to make herself a scarecrow, and a fitting object for ridicule in the public prints; and it is in this relegation of her personal attire to its proper place in the plane of her existence, that woman has surmounted the greatest of her barriers to higher advancement and enjoyment to the full of the noble things offered her by the world.

“Oblivion is not to be hired,” yet in the annals of their ancestresses women may find many seeds, the harvest from which they now enjoy; they may learn the real proportion of dress in every-day life, and they may see the ludicrous follies of excess therein. F. H.

A WILFUL WARD.

By RUTH LAMB, Author of “Work, Wait, Win,” “Sackcloth and Ashes,” etc.

CHAPTER XV.



CHRISTMAS came and went. Kathleen's party was a great success, largely owing to the efforts of Aylmer, Geraldine and Hetty Stapleton who had been pressed into the service. Without them, the hands of the young hostess would have been too full.

In pity for Ralph's loneliness, he was invited to stay the night at the Hall. It would be too sad, Kathleen said, for the lonely boy to go back from all the brightness there to the

dead quiet of Monk's How.

The boy enjoyed his visit to the full, but Kathleen noticed that he avoided Hetty Stapleton in a determined fashion.

“Don't you know Miss Stapleton?” she asked. “She is such a favourite with all the young people in the neighbourhood. Or have you and she quarrelled?”

The boy's face crimsoned as he answered, “Of course I know Miss Stapleton. Everybody does at Hollingsby. We haven't quarrelled, only I don't think we are friends.”

“How is that, Ralph? She has surely not been unkind to you. If so, I must take her to task.”

“Please don't say a word, Miss Mountford,” pleaded Ralph earnestly. “Miss Stapleton always tries to be kind to me. She has wanted to give me things, and has asked me to ride with her and—”

Ralph paused, though he could have given Kathleen a long list of offered kindnesses which he had curtly rejected.

“And you would not accept the

things, or join in the rides, eh, Ralph? What can Hetty have done to offend you?”

“Nothing to me, only I know father doesn't like her, and she doesn't like him now, though I think they were friends once. I heard Sarah say so. You see, Miss Mountford, I couldn't take presents or go riding with a lady if father was not friends with her, could I? You'll be sure not to tell Miss Stapleton or anybody why I refused, because Sarah was saying that to the cook one day, and she didn't know that I heard her.”

Kathleen promised to respect Ralph's confidence, then said, “But you go out with me.”

“That is different. I know father likes me to be with you. He said one day, that there was no lady in the world he admired so much as he did you, and there had only been one so good before, and that was my mother.”

Seldom had Kathleen been so glad of an interruption as she was at that moment. Her attention was called from Ralph by Hetty Stapleton herself, and so no response was needed. But the boy's words—the echo of his father's—were not forgotten.

It seemed that Captain Torrance was in no hurry to return to Monk's How. He came there occasionally, but made no long stay, and took no advantage of the relations between Miss Mountford and Ralph. His visits to Hollingsby were purely business ones, and that he might see the boy and make arrangements for his comfort and the supply of his wants. He sent Kathleen a few lines expressive of his gratitude for her goodness to Ralph, and said that she had poured brightness into his young life and influenced him for good, a work worthy of one so pure and noble as herself. He prayed her to continue her kindness to the lad as he, of necessity, must be much absent from home, and told her that whilst he could never repay her, he well knew that such a nature as

hers would find its reward in the fact that she was helping others, above all a motherless boy.

Always Captain Torrance harped on this string, and always too he awoke a responsive chord in Kathleen's breast. She sent him a few lines in reply, told of her affection for the bright boy, and promised to do all in her power for his happiness and benefit.

“Ralph has brightened our quiet life here,” she wrote, “and we should all miss him were he long absent.”

That was all, but it satisfied Captain Torrance. He did not even call at the Hall, and only on a single occasion did Kathleen exchange a few words with him out of doors.

This was when winter festivities, such as are usual in country houses, had come to an end. The young leaves were showing on the trees and the song of birds was heard in the land, telling everywhere of new life—the glorious awakening of the world after the deadness of winter.

The country roads were dry, and riding was most enjoyable in the bright sunshine and with lengthening days; for April had proved agreeably false to her character, and was more inclined for smiles than tears.

Kathleen and Ralph were out riding together on Polly and the Kelpie. Miss Mountford was otherwise unattended. After a brisk canter they were riding quietly homeward, when Captain Torrance came in sight. He had arrived at Monk's How quite unexpectedly during Ralph's absence. Naturally the boy was wild with delight on seeing his father, and equally naturally, the latter exchanged a cordial greeting with Kathleen, and made use of the opportunity to repeat the thanks he had previously written. But the tone and looks of the speaker were far more eloquent than written words could be, however well considered, and Kathleen listened with undisguised pleasure.

“You have given me far more credit than I deserve,” she said. “Ours is