

Modern Clothes Are Making Venuses, Say the Artists

High Praise for the "Liberty Clothes" Now the Fashion and Promising Finer Figures for Women—But James Montgomery Flagg Says "It Won't Last"

BY NINA CARTER.

WOMEN'S clothes have been debated since the beginning of time. Beyond a doubt Adam found fault with Eve's, or he may have admired her taste. The certain thing is that he made remarks.

Men do not agree about women's clothes. But, then, neither do women. Women's clothes will continue to the end of time to be noticed, talked about, wrangled about.

Every change of style brings fresh phases of dispute.

Once the corset distressed the souls of the solitons. Nobody talks of them any more. Once the length of skirts was a matter of grave import. People have forgotten such matters—er content themselves with saying, as a man did the other day, "Length of skirts? They have no length."

The truth is that the clothes of women never ranged so freely and so widely the whole of woman's beauty and of comfort. Yes, women have begun to insist on being comfortable. Their clothes, inside and out, are made for shoulders in most instances. Their waist is free. Short lengths give them a free walk. Greek dancing fashions have taught them to admire the elemental garb that once would have shocked. The beauty and health of the figure rather than the flummaries of the clothes themselves now begin to seem like a genuine ideal.

Fashion's Liberty of Choice.

When disputes or silences happen we go to the artists to find out where we are "at." They growl or exclaim with pleasure, according to the testimony. I believe they try to be honest—as honest as men can be when they are discussing anything of interest to women. So I have discussed the question with various prominent artists.

Mr. Salvatore F. Bilotti, whose beautiful sculpture is well known to lovers of art, took occasion to give high praise to the American girl's figure. This is what Mr. Bilotti says:

"In speaking of the American woman as having the best figure in the world at the present time, I mean the young women, who, with a few exceptions, have grown up during the past four years. The years, the years, the years, the fashionable clothes of a grown-up or a semi-grown-up woman four years ago had the advantage of developing that her sisters of years before that, owing to the then prevailing fashions, missed."

"If you remember, 15 years ago, and even 10, the style demanded high bust, long-pointed waist, large hips and long skirts. Add to this the high collar then prevalent, and you have the human form so imprisoned that there is no chance for nature to do her work. The flesh was shoved here and there by the corsets, the limbs had no freedom of movement, the throat was compressed by a tight collar. Really, such clothes were instruments of torture, and the result was an abnormal figure and usually a weak woman."

"Then came a step that led to the shorter skirt, but the same long and high corsets were in vogue, the shoes that were introduced had straight, rather slender heels, set at the wrong point of the foot, and threw even the woman with a most graceful carriage off her balance. The waist had increased slightly in width from the narrow, wasplike affair that had shoved the flesh upward and down to the hips, but still the diaphragm was compressed. Where the women in those styles breathed from I don't know, for all natural expansion in natural places seemed cut off."

Coming of the Shorter Skirt.

"Up to four years ago fashion was wavering. It didn't know just what next to do. It had pinched and twisted and contorted until it seemed impossible to think of more torturing. Then suddenly there burst forth an era of fashion that carried its followers to just the reverse extreme. Women no longer ruined the hair by use of curling irons and curling papers. The fashion of straight hair came in, and with it very short skirts, low corsets, low necks, and then, thank goodness, French-heeled shoes."

"As a result of this change you have in the young girls who had not been following the fashions before that time wonderful specimens of womanhood, and even in those who had pandered to the fads, both artistic and unwholesome, you find a vast improvement. Let us hope that the present fashions remain in vogue in their important fundamentals—forever."

Praise for American Grace.

Alexander Zeitzlin came to America shortly after the beginning of the war. Mr. Zeitzlin is a sculptor of wide reputation in Paris and during the short time he has been in this country his work has received the highest praise. The sculptor's work runs in very happy lines. In his portraits he interprets the smile of the person by the expression more than the heavier and more serious moods. In his figure work he has a touch of daintiness not made weak by lack of technique, and his fourth figure recently made from an American model is a good example of this style of Mr. Zeitzlin's.

"So you want me to tell you what I think of the women of this country, do you?" replied Mr. Zeitzlin to a question.

tion. "Well, I cannot tell you in three words."

"One thing that has greatly impressed me is the women's grace, and it has undoubtedly been highly brought out by the new style of dancing that I see has been in vogue here for some time past. Take the interpretative dance, for instance. This no longer belongs to the professional world alone. It has been taken up and made a fad of by society, which has proved society very wise indeed. This free dancing has done much to develop not only the form, but grace and a keen sense of rhythm."

"No one can do one of these dances in a corset, hence the corset has been abandoned in many instances, or when worn at all is the merest excuse, such a thing, and supplies only the necessary support for clothes."

"These corsets leave the diaphragm free and the women are breathing as their maker meant them to breathe. This means chest and throat development, and though the American woman has always been noted for her beautiful neck, it is more beautiful than ever now."

"I have never seen such freedom in walking. The short skirts have much to do with this. The step can be springy and wide, not mincing, as though one were not able to walk well."

"All in all, the fashions of the present day are working a very great good, and I know all who have artistic sense hope they will not be soon overthrown by some finicky, foolish twist that is going to undo all the good that has been accomplished."

But now comes the skeptic. If you think for a minute that you are going to get Montgomery Flagg to agree that all is rose-colored, you are mistaken. Mr. Flagg has been drawing girls for a good many years and knows the girl proposition from A to Z. Being a modest man Mr. Flagg does not boast of knowing much of women as women, say more than thousands of other men would dare say that they know "woman," not at all.

"Don't tell me," said Mr. Flagg, and it sounded almost threatening, "don't tell me that women are going to remain sensibly dressed for any length of time. Don't tell me that they are going to give their digestive organs a real chance to make them strong, for the first thing you know they will succumb to the fact of banishing it. It is the style to be thin. They will get themselves ill by rich foods if it is the style to be large, they will pinch in their waists or let them out or do anything that the time wants them to do. Anything they think will make them attractive to men. Half of the time they don't know how ridiculous they are making themselves look."

Mr. Flagg Is Skeptical.

"But," Mr. Flagg was asked, "are there not some women who are sane and sensible? Have not our clothes of today done something toward making women better formed?"

"Perhaps, perhaps," said Mr. Flagg half grudgingly; then he added emphatically, "But it will not last, so what's the use talking about it?"

Now what are you going to do with a man who won't give you a concrete expression? Just keep on asking questions until he does; so Mr. Flagg was asked:

"Do you think that modern dancing has done anything for the women?"

Mr. Flagg looked disgusted, and then said wearily:

"I'm so tired of seeing pictures of women floating around 'twixt heaven and earth arrayed in a piece of bath towel that I can't express what I feel, but"—was he going to say something favorable at last? He was. He said the dancing has given the women more grace, and I dare say has developed them along rather good lines. But it won't last—they'll just up and do something to upset all the good they have been doing."

The Eternal Discussion.

"There has never been an age in which women's clothes have not been discussed. I dare say that back in the old Greek times there was fault found. Besides, I don't believe flowing garments were given in honor to all the women then than they would be now. Of course, it is far preferable that women should wear corsets that let them breathe as they do today than that they should wear affairs that they used to affect. I don't like the over-athletic woman, the mannish woman, I don't like the Lydia Langrish type. I like the sensible, well-balanced woman who dresses always in moderation, who does not run to extremes in styles, and I think you will find that all men—save the jaded old or young fellows—like the healthy, sane woman."

"Yes, I must admit that if—mind you, I say 'if'—the styles last and the women become sensible they will give us a strong generation of older women and they will be better formed—but, as I have said before—it won't last." And Mr. Flagg shook his head and sighed in resignation before turning to add some of his bold, free strokes to the figure of a young girl in a short Greek dancing dress that he was drawing.

But all artists are not skeptics and I may report that most of them are convinced that the Venus figure has a better chance of coming since "Liberty Clothes" came in than it ever had before.

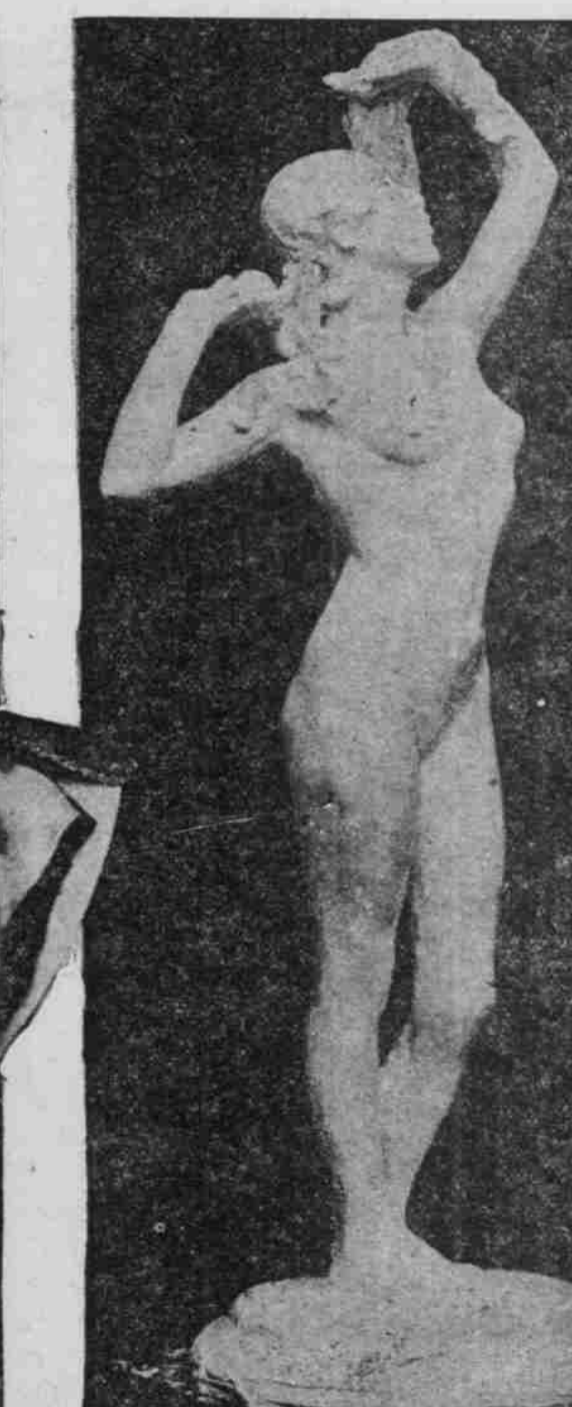


JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

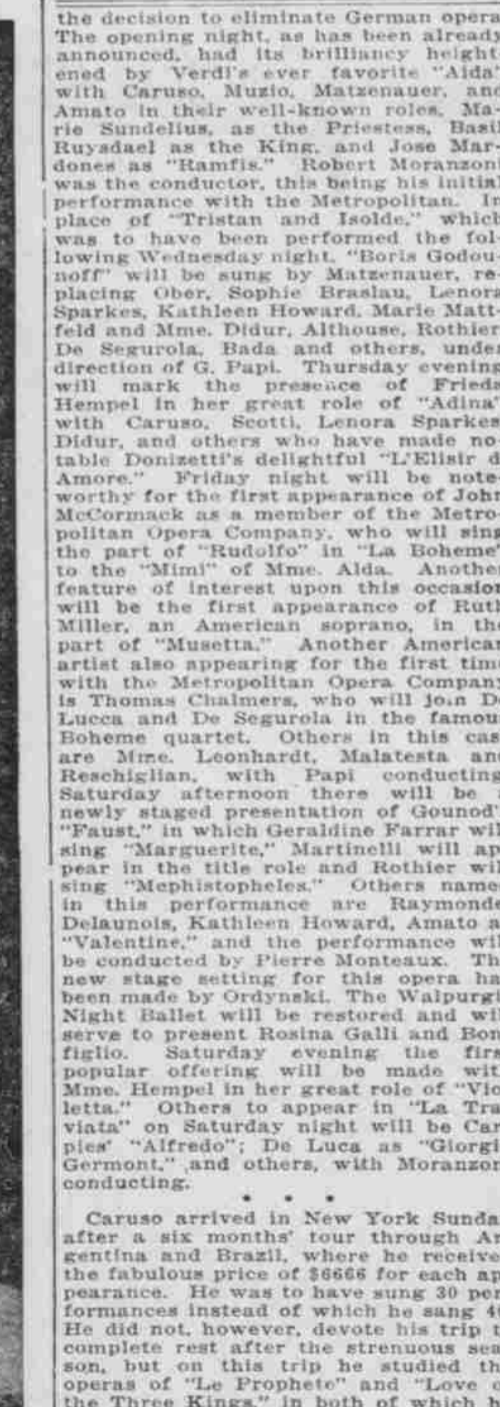
James Montgomery Flagg Likes to Draw Pictures Like This When Romantic Illustration Gives Him the Excuse—But He Is Sure That Women Won't Wear Sensible Clothes (Such as They Are Now Wearing) Very Long Without Being in Danger of a Relapse.



A Typical Evening Gown of the Present Fashion, Draped from the Shoulders in Graceful Freedom.



The Free Flow of Modern Drapery Is Well Illustrated in This Evening Gown Picture of Norma Talmadge.



The Lithe Modern Figure as Sculptured by Salvatore Bilotti.

ART CIRCLES STILL STIRRED OVER 'STAR-SPANGLED BANNER'

(Continued from First Page.)

of this present crisis in art and history could never have been imagined in a reasonable thinking country. It may be that "The Star-Spangled Banner" does not fit easily within the compass of the voice for singing by the orchestra, but it is a glorious and noble outburst, a true tonal and word picture of just what it symbolizes—and what is a National hymn not a symbol?

It seems rather a pity that the Government should have been influenced to the extent of calling together a body of musicians to make any sort of "selection." It may be, however, that this decision comes as a mere desire to standardize it, so that it will never again be arranged according to the whim of the player, as in the case of Dr. Muck's performance on Thursday night, when the violins were embroidered into in the same manner as the bacchanale figure in Wagner into the "Pilgrims' chorus in Tannhauser." Those

commissioned into this service are Walter Damrosch, John Philip Sousa, O. G. Sonneck, formerly musical librarian of Washington, D. C.; Messrs. Smith and Earhart, who will establish an orchestra and band arrangement which will be accepted as the standard and which must always be used, instead of leaving it to the judgment of the public at large. It is at least to be hoped that no violence will be done the simple "Star-Spangled Banner," which has for over 110 years thrilled those who love it for what it is and for whom it stands as patriotism stands above art, culture, education and even home.

More serious is the condition of grand opera, now that it has seemed necessary to eliminate all German works from the repertory, but there is no little talk and a growing demand for Wagner in English. This does not mean all German opera in English, although what more delightful Christmas

offering has there ever been than "Hansel and Gretel," which has already been given in English many times by the Aborn forces with signal success. That the Richard Strauss works should be done in a language which would make them understood by the audience is unthinkable. This country has not yet arrived at the cultural plane where "The Rose Cavalier" ceases to offend the sensibilities, for which reason we must deny ourselves the musical joy which was dispersed in the musical side. It is understood that the direction of the Metropolitan will be offered a petition from American music lovers to give some of the Wagner works in English. If there be any of our own English-speaking singers who object to a restudy many could be found who will be willing and able to sing the roles.

The engagement at the Metropolitan of Louise Homer, announced this week, will restore an artist whose presence will go far toward making English Wagner productions possible. Mrs. Fremstad, Mme. Matzenauer, Florence

Easton, Lilla Robeson, Julia Clausen are all figures in the operatic world who could deliver Wagner as well in English as in any other language.

With much German music out of the way one might expect that the artists who supply the musical pabulum to this country would turn to French works as never before, instead of which there is a strong tendency in musical circles to do away with French music altogether. This attitude is brought about by the really exorbitant price asked by the agents or those claiming authority in behalf of the Association of French Composers and Authors. In a day like this where the burdens of concert giving have grown so great that one marvels at the courage of any one to enter the field, it is much easier to leave only "by arrangement with the association, etc.," said arrangements to be the payment of anything from \$10 to \$25 and more. America has done herself proud in the dissemination of French music. There are few cities in the

country where the music, as well as the names of Debussy, Ravel, D'Indy, Duparc, Dubois, Saint Saens, Chausson, Chabrier, are unknown, and the programme is considered as incomplete when French masters do not figure strongly. But the old and homely idiom of killing the goose that lays the golden egg is very near the surface at the present time, and the powers eager to establish a lasting relation between this country and the art of France were never in a stronger position to do so than now when of necessity German music will be reduced to a minimum on all programmes. In all studios, on every stage in the country that offered the greatest outlet that country ever knew.

The return of Alice Nielsen to the light opera stage brought out an audience at the first performance that for brilliancy and size seemed more like the opening of the opera season. "Kitty Darlin'" based upon the David Belasco play, "Sweet Kitty Bellaire," brought the noted stage manager into the musical production made by Otto Harbach and Rudolf Friml, both men having done better work. But as a medium for Miss Nielsen and for the sort of staging always to be expected from Belasco "Kitty Darlin'" at the Casino is attractive. Miss Nielsen's singing and acting are always of the highest and most refined types and she retains all of the personal charm which has made her dear to the music lovers of every country in which she has appeared. Sidoric Esperto in a part much smaller than her talents deserve, made an emphatic "hit" both in her singing and by her very marked beauty. Edwin Stevens is one of the rare old school comedians and lends most of the humor to the play. Another favorite, Glenn Hall, is noted in the capable list of singing actors' cast for this production.

The Metropolitan Opera Company announced a brilliant week beginning last Monday night; following the necessity to change arrangements things have been resumed as usual at the Metropolitan where they are planning many revivals not anticipated prior to

the decision to eliminate German opera. The opening night, as has been already announced, had its brilliancy heightened by Verdi's ever favorite "Aida" with Caruso, Muzio, Matzenauer, and Amato in their well-known roles. Marie Sundelius, as the Priestess, Basti Ruyadael as the King, and Jose Mar-dones as "Ramiro." Robert Moranzoni was the conductor, this being his initial performance with the Metropolitan. In place of "Tristan and Isolde" which was to have been performed the following Wednesday night, "Boris Godounoff" will be sung by Matzenauer, replacing Ober-Sophy. Robert Moranzoni, Karlheinz Howard, Marie Matt-feld and Mme. Didur, Althouse, Rothler, De Segurulo, Bada and others, under direction of G. Papp. Thursday evening will mark the presence of Frieda Hempel in her great role of "Adina" with Caruso, Scotti, Lenora Sparkes, Didur, and others who have made a notable Donizetti's delightful "L'Elisir d'Amore." Friday night will be noteworthy for the first appearance of John Aronson as a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company, who will sing the part of "Rodolfo" in "La Boheme" at the "Mink" of Mme. Alda. Another feature of interest upon this occasion will be the first appearance of Ruth Miller, an American soprano, in the part of "Musetta." Another American artist also appearing for the first time with the Metropolitan Opera Company is Thomas Chalmers, who will join De Luca and De Segurulo in the famous Boheme quartet. Others in this cast are Mme. Leonhardt, Malatesta and Reschiglian, with Papi conducting. Saturday afternoon will be the newly staged presentation of Gounod's "Faust," in which Geraldine Farrar will sing "Marguerite," Martelli will appear in the title role and Rothler will sing "Mephistopheles." Others named in this performance are Raymonde, DeLuca, Kathleen Howard, Amato and "Valentine," and the performance will be conducted by Pierre Monteaux. The new stage setting for this opera has been made by Otto Harbach and will serve to present Rosina Galli and Bonfiglio. Saturday evening the first popular offering will be made with Mme. Hempel in her great role of "Violletta." Others to appear in "La Traviata" on Saturday night will be Carpio, "Alfredo"; De Luca as "Giorgio Germont"; and others, with Moranzoni conducting.

Caruso arrived in New York Sunday after a six months' tour through Argentina and Brazil, where he received the fabulous price of \$100,000 for his appearance. He was to have sung 30 performances instead of which he sang 40. He did not, however, devote his trip to complete rest after the strenuous season, but on this trip he studied the operas of "Le Prophete" and "Love of the Three Kings" in both of which he will appear this season. He did not know until Mr. Gatti-Casazza met him at the pier, that he would sing "Aida" on the opening night. In addition to his own performances he sang at 13 concerts for the benefit of Italian war sufferers, realizing \$100,000. He was deeply touched to learn the news from Italy, which was received by wireless. His eldest son, Rodolfo, aged 19, is with the Alpini at the front, and Enrico, Jr., aged 15, is with the Boy Scouts.

Andreas de Segurulo, the eminent Spanish basso, of the Metropolitan Opera Company, returned Friday after a brilliantly successful season in Mexico. De Segurulo will resume his enviable position at the Metropolitan where for a number of years he has been a favorite.

Paul Althouse returned from a brilliant concert tour to welcome little Mary Elizabeth Althouse, who was not in his home when he left. The Metropolitan Opera tenor and his charming wife, Zabetta Brenska, the mezzo-soprano, are receiving congratulations on the birth of their little daughter, born Saturday, October 20. Mr. Althouse will fill a number of roles this season which he has had in preparation for some time. His first appearance at the Metropolitan will be on Wednesday evening when he will sing "Demitri" by "Boris Godounoff."