

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. On 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 solicitous. Nobody talks of them any more. Once the length of skirts was a matter of grave import. People have forgotten such matters—or content themselves with saying, as one did the other day, "length of skirt? That leaves no length."

The truth is that the clothes of women never ranged so freely and so widely the whole gamut of beauty and of comfort. Yes, women have begun to look on being comfortable. Their clothes, inside and out, hang from the shoulders in most instances. Their waist is free. Short lengths give them a free walk. Greek dancing fashions have taught them to admire the elements of grace that once would have shocked. The beauty and health of the figure rather than the flummery 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 say what they think with pleasure according to their 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. Biliotti, 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. Biliotti 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 first four years. The young girl who went into the fashionable clothes of a grown-up or a semi-grownup woman four years ago has had the wonderful advantage to develop that her sisters of yesterday did not have to the then prevailing fashions misled.

"If you remember, 15 years ago, and even 10, the style demanded high bust, long-pointed waist, large hips and long skirts. And to this the high collar, the tight bodice and the throat were 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 the skirt that led to the short 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 point of the toe, with most graceful results off her balance. The waist had increased slightly in width, from the narrow, wasp-like affair that had shoved the flesh upward and down to the hips, but still the diaphragm was compressed. When the women 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 hot irons; 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 coming of the shorter skirt, following the fashions before that time wonderful specimens of womanhood, and even in those who had pandered to the fads, both inartistic and unwhole-some, you find a vast improvement.

Let me say that the present fashions remain in vogue in their important fundamentalities—forever."

Praise for American Grace.

Alexander Zeitlin came to America shortly after the beginning of the war. Mr. Zeitlin is a sculptor of wide reputation in Paris and during the short time he has been in this country his work has received much attention. This sculptor's work runs in very happy lines. In his portraits he interprets the smile of the person he is portraying, the smile of the person he is depicting, serious moods. In his figure work he has a touch of daintiness not made weak by lack of technique, and his fountain figures recently made from an American model are a good example of this style of Zeitlin.

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

ART CIRCLES STILL STIRRED OVER 'STAR-SPANGLED BANNER.'

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offered 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, leaving which may be necessary of 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 two years thrilled those who love it for what it is and for whom it stands as patriots stand 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 little talk and a growing demand for Wagner in English. This does not mean all German opera in English, although what more delightful Christmas

songs. "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 which has been in vogue here for some time past. Take the interpretive dance, for instance. This no longer belongs to the professional world alone. It has been taken up and made a fad by society, which has proved social exercise, 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 for such a thing, and supplies only the necessary support for clothes."

"These experts have 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, more mincing, when the toes are never off the floor. 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 the sticky, foolish twist that is going to undo all the good that has been accomplished."

But now comes the skeptic. If you get for a minute that you are going to get Montgomery Flagg to agree that women's clothes are good, you are in for a treat. Mr. Flagg has been drawing girls for a good many years and knows the proposition from A to Z. Being a modest man Mr. Flagg does not boast of knowledge much of women as women, any more than thousands of other men would dare say that they know "woman" not at all.

"Don't tell me," said Mr. Flagg, "it sounds almost threatening: 'don't tell me that women are going to remain sensibly dressed for a 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 temptation of letting it all be thin. They will let 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 they will 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 today a tendency toward making women better formed?"

"Perhaps, perhaps," said Mr. Flagg half grudgingly; then he added emphatically, "But it will not last, so why is that you talking about it?"

Now comes another question 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, and always with a bath towel that I can't express what I feel, but"—was he going to say something favorable at last? He was. "But the dancing has given the women more grace, and I assure you has developed the along rather good side. 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. I don't like the flowing garments, I don't like the women becoming to all the women 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 those that bind them off to affect an overathletic woman, the manly woman. I don't like the Lydia Languish type. I like the sensible, well-balanced woman who dresses always in proportion, 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, 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 and going to his box to look back to the figure of a young girl in a short Greek dancing dress that he was drawing.

But all artists are not skeptics and one confirmed that the Venus figure has a better chance of coming since "Liberty Clothes" came in than it ever had before.



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 Lite Modern Figure as Sculptured by Salvatore Biliotti.

the decision to eliminate German opera. The opening night, as has been already announced, had its brilliancy heightened by Verdi's ever favored "Aida" with Lauritz Melchior, Marie Matzenauer, Amato in their well-known roles. Marie Sundellius as the Priestess, Basil Ruyanov as the King, and Jose Morandones as "Ramfis." Robert Moranzoni was the conductor, being his initial performance in this city. Monday night, in place of "Tristan and Isolde," which was to have been performed the following Wednesday night, "Boris Godounoff" will be sung by Matzenauer, replacing the original Sophie Tucker. Kathleen Howard, Marie Mattfeld and Mme. Didur, Althouse, Rothier, De Segurola, Bada and others, under direction of G. Papi. Thursday evening will mark the presence of Frieda Hempel in her grande rôle of "Mimi" with Caruso, Scotti, Lenora Sparkes, Didur, and others who have made notable Donizetti's delightful "L'Elisir d'Amore." Friday night will be noteworthy for the first appearance of John McCormack as a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company who will sing the part of "Rudolfo" in "La Bohème" to the "Mimi" of Mme. Alda. Another feature of interest upon this occasion will be the first appearance of Ruth Miller, the 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 Segurola in the famous "Bachet" quartet. Other newcomers are Mrs. Leonhardt, Malatesta and Reschigl, with Papi conducting. Saturday afternoon there will be a newly staged presentation of Gounod's "Faust," in which Geraldine Farrar will sing "Marguerite." Martini will appear in the title role and Rothier will sing "Mephistopheles." Others named in this performance are Raymond, Delaunoy, Kathleen Howard, Amato as "Valentine," and the performance will be conducted by Pierre Monteux. The new stage setting for this opera was made by Ordynski. The Walpurgis Night Ballet will be restored and will serve to present Rosina Galli and Bonfiglio. Saturday evening the first popular offering will be made with Mme. Howard in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." Others to appear in "La Traviata" on Saturday night will be Carries "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 \$6666 for each appearance. He will sing at the Metropolitan instead of which he sang 40 performances. He did not, however, devote his trip to complete rest after the strenuous season, but on this trip he studied the operas of "Le Prophète" and "Love of the King," which he will sing 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 at 12 consecutive matinees of "La Traviata" he will sing at the Metropolitan, where for a number of years he has been a favorite.

Paul Althouse returned from a brilliant concert tour to welcome him in his home when he left. The Metropolitan Opera tenor and his charming wife, Zita de Laszka, 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 "Dimitri" as "Boris Godounoff."

offering has there ever been than "Hansel and Gretel," which has always been given in English many times by the Metropolitan and with 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 culture of the people who wrote "Rosenkavalier" ceases to offend the sensibilities, for which reason we must deny ourselves the musical joy which was dispensed in the musical side. It is understood that the direction of the Metropolitan has offered a position from abroad to 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 Metropolitan, Louise Homer, announced this week will restore an artist whose presence will go far toward making English Wagner productions possible. Mme. Fremstad, Mme. Matzenauer, Florence

Easton, Lila Robeson, Julian Claussen 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 publum to this country would turn French works as never before, instead of which there is a strong tendency to turn to English cycles 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 on behalf of the Association of French Composers and Authors. The day before 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 out such works as can be performed without the expense of a large orchestra, etc., said arrangements to be 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 Saëns, Massenet, Gouvy, etc., are known, and the grammar 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 when when of necessity German music will be reduced to 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 many years had not been equalled. "Kitty Darlin'" based upon the David Belasco play, "Sweet Kitty Belaire," brought the noted stage manager into the musi-