

# OLD BEAUTIES in NEW GOWNS

HOW THESE GRAND DAMES WOULD APPEAR IN MODERN COSTUME



The Duchess of Devonshire in a Sheath.



Nell Gwynn in a Lace Waist and Wearing Pompon.

enough to see the styles in which she had shone completely change. She was Sarah Siddons, the grand dame par excellence of the stage.

No scandal dimmed her name, and to her commanding presence untold thousands paid tribute. But where would be the queen of tragedy, arrayed in one of our gowns for an afternoon jaunt? Would she be any handsomer than hundreds of women we pass every day?

And while these beauties were reigning in England, others of equal note held sway on the continent. There was Marie Antoinette Josephine Jeanne de Lorraine, for instance. Daughter of the great Maria Theresa and the Emperor Francis I, this Austrian princess who ascended the throne of France came honestly by her regal bearing.

First the idol of her people, then the prey of the guillotine, she was persecuted with every sort of slander her ingenious enemies could think of. Her fair name was assailed, her loyalty impugned. But her

THE old and the new—they are everlastingly leading to those eternal questions:

Are modern women more beautiful than the grand dames of long ago? Are we better or worse than our forebears? Is the world's seeming advancement only a step toward decadence, a reversion to savagery?

Savants and scientists have haggled over these posers, from the times one now calls ancient. They have never been settled. Probably they never will be.

But one thing scarcely admits of argument: the continued beautification of women's apparel is apparent. The gowns of long ago are monstrosities compared to the artistic creations of today.

And how would the beauties, the grand dames of history, compare with their modern sisters, in the creations of the latest couturiers?

In this case, let the eye judge.

PERHAPS it is not well to pry too deeply into the mysteries of the past. Disillusionment, cruel and complete, is but all too certain a result.

Those of us who have hearkened unto the iconoclasts know that our ancestors of only a few generations ago were a pretty "rummy" lot. For the men the fashion was to "tank up" regularly after dinner. Reckless gambling was but an ordinary recreation. Women's reputations were chiefly valued as an excuse for duels.

And as to the women—perhaps they never change much. Still, we know that, at any rate, the eternal feminine of the present day has much smaller hands and feet than of yore.

Likewise her lines are more sinuous and



Countess Potocka as a Shirtwaist Girl.



Mrs. Siddons, Ready for an Afternoon Jaunt.

graceful. Artistically correct may be the ancient proportions. But to a common, ordinary man, a Grecian goddess in a Paris gown would loom up as a frightful frump.

As to faces—each century is said to have its distinctive type. Each nation, too, has some favorite model which it considers most beautiful.

But what mere, modern man cannot, in an afternoon, see enough handsome women on any big city street to match a whole history full of female beauties!

After all, wouldn't it be a shame to drag pretty Nell Gwynn from her niche of fame and put her in a lace waist and pompon? But no doubt, if she lived today, she would be forced to affect a pompon, or some such trifle, to make herself appear taller.

Truth to tell, Mistress Nell, whose beauty lifted her from the humble and none too respectable calling of a tavern singer to the favoritism of Charles II along toward the fag end of the sixteenth century—Mistress Nell, painful as it may sound, was somewhat "dum."

After the actress, as perhaps the most notable grand dame of Britain's varied history, came the Duchess of Devonshire, whom Gainsborough immortalized as the highest type of eighteenth century beauty. Modern men would pronounce her a real "stunner."

But how would she look in a sheath? Would she be such a wonderful vote-getter for Charles James Fox, the dashing statesman, gambler and turfman, as she was when she inspired the following lines:

Arrayed in matchless beauty, Devon's fair  
In Fox's favor takes a zealous part;  
But oh! whenever the plucker comes, beware—  
She supplicates a vote and steals a heart.

About the middle of the eighteenth century was born another far-famed British beauty, who lived until well into the nineteenth—long



Mme. Le Brun as a Modern Ball Room Beauty.

personal charm was never questioned. Still, would she appear so becomingly in a lace gown? For answer, see her picture.

Of the same epoch were two typical French charmers, Mme. Recamier and Mme. Le Brun. Each, in her way, was, for that time, perfection.

Every one is familiar with the charming picture of Mme. Le Brun and her son. In her the spirituelle is characteristic. Perfection of feature could never be more attractive than the loveliness reflected by her eyes. Yet in a ball gown of today she is a pretty woman—no more, no less.

So it is with Mme. Recamier. As her likeness has been handed down to us, her lineaments portray the sweetness and self-sacrifice which were the shining ornaments of her character. Innocent she must have been, when, in a wicked age, she retained the friendship of her lovers' wives. Self-sacrificing she certainly was, when she braved Napoleon's ire and incurred banishment by her undying friendship for Mme. de Stael.

What more fascinating than her portrait, half recumbent, in a flowing empire gown? Yet the same face in a costume which sports a half-mannish waistcoat shows us simply a pretty, "cute" looking girl. Dressed in that fashion, would the charm of her presence have been so transcendent as to ensnare such commanding figures as Guizot and Chateaubriand?

Then, for the typical Teutonic beauty, who saw the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries when in her prime, we can find none more representative than Louise of Prussia. Of commanding presence, yet womanly withal, her beauty was of the true queenly type. Beautiful still, she seems, in a Paris tailored gown. But as queenly! Let the eye judge.

And last, the Countess Potocka, the wondrous young Polish woman, whose wiles lured the mighty Napoleon to his doom in Moscow. Long before he tired of her smiles the city was in flames and his magnificent army was left to become the prey of a merciless winter. But had the conqueror met her attired in a shirtwaist? Perhaps the history of Europe would have a different story to tell.



Mme. Recamier in a Waistcoat and Topcoat.



Marie Antoinette Arrayed in a Costume of Lace.



Louise of Prussia in a Paris Street Gown.