

Should Fashion Take a Backward Turn

As Marguerite of Valois would have appeared in the days of Louis XIII



Miss Marguerite Moncheur, daughter of the Washington Diplomatic Corps, as a young woman of the Gallic period



Miss Elizabeth Shirley, a Louisville belle in the court of Louis Philippe

by historians that at one time Marguerite of Valois wore so many jewels on her dress that, although a strong woman, she was almost overcome by the weight.

A few years later fashion became more sober. How a modern beauty would appear in the dress adopted during the reign of Henry IV may be seen by observing the Countess of Warwick, one of the handsomest matrons in England, in the dress of the period. The countess, were she to appear in this costume, would select some sober hued velvet, damask or silk for her dress. The bodice would be made to fit extremely tight, and the V-shaped cut in front would be filled with Venetian or Florentine lace. She would wear a starched fluted collarette trimmed with lace, and a small heart-shaped cap nestling on her hair. Her skirt would be exaggerated, her sleeves rather full and embroidered with crosswork, and lace cuffs.

A story is told of Marie Antoinette, who sat at court and set the fashions, as follows: "One day, in 1775, the new queen took up from her dressing table two peacock feathers.



Mrs. George Barnett in Fifteenth Century Dress

How Modern Beauties Would Appear in Costumes of Long Ago

WHAT if, by some caprice of her capricious nature, Dame Fashion should suddenly frown upon present modes in women's dress and should restore to favor the costumes of olden times?

Think of it, madame or maid, and rejoice or tremble; view the possibility with joy or dismay; but do not cast it aside as preposterous. For unexpected and startling, indeed, are some of the whims of fashion, as sudden reversions to styles of Cleopatra and the Directoire period within recent times attest.

Ask your modiste whether she thinks that by any chance the dress worn, for instance, by Marguerite of France, is likely ever to return to favor. It may be possible, she will probably reply—who knows?

How, think you then, would the beauties of today appear, were the fashions of times long gone become restored to favor? How would madame look in the wide-skirted creations of the time of Louis Philippe; or how would the daughter appear in the Greek effect of the Gallic period, the earliest of French fashions?

MOST fashions come from Paris. Were a modern beauty to adopt the first prevalent costume favored by the women of France, she would look strange indeed.

During the first several hundred years of the Christian era the belles of Gaul—a country pretty much like modern France—wore a very simple costume, resembling that of the Grecian women. It consisted of a wide pleated tunic, with a mantle which fell from the head, partly veiling the face, and resting over the shoulders.

Some belles of that era were not content with one tunic and wore as many as four, one over the other. In those days they carried small handbags made of network—the great-grandmother of the reticule of the present day.

There was little chance for variety of costume among the rival belles of Gaul, except in the way of mantles. These were linen, and of many colors.

Historians agree that the women of Gaul were beautiful, and yet resorted to the arts of make-up; they used unguents and paints, coated their faces with chalk dissolved in vinegar, and added a rosy tinge by the use of a vermilion dye. They put lime in their hair to whiten it, and gave their eyebrows an arch with black tallow. Their favorite morning bath was not in dew, but in the froth of beer, which was believed to whiten the skin.

Jewelry was extravagantly worn by those who could afford it. It was not until the conquest of Gaul by Caesar that the women began to vary their costumes and copy those of the Roman women.

You wonder how a modern beauty would appear in this dress? One of the prettiest women in the diplomatic corps at Washington is Miss Marguerite Moncheur, daughter of Baron Moncheur, the Belgian minister. Here, with Miss Moncheur appears in the old costume, which is in keeping with her style of beauty.



Miss Marguerite Gould in a Twentieth Century Costume



Princess Henry of Prussia as a Dame in the Time of Henry IV, 1574-89

Until the eleventh century there were few striking changes in costume. Miss Marjorie Gould, daughter of George J. Gould and one of the handsomest of New York's younger set, easily might have been a belle of the era immediately preceding that century. The costume consisted of a long tunic and a mantle. Hoods were worn by women of all classes; those of high rank wore hoods of velvet; they parted their hair in the middle and let it fall over their shoulders in two plaits. A lady of high birth wore her veil to her feet, while a woman of low position wore it only to her waist.

Miss Gould, had she lived in those days, would have had her gown made scantily in the front and back, but with deep folds at the sides. She could also have worn a diadem over her mantle, or hood, or, had she preferred, merely a ribbon about the forehead ornamented with flowers.

In the fourteenth century French women began to leave off the veil and wear instead the "cornette." This was a hat made of parchment and covered with silk. It reached its apotheosis during the reign of Charles VI, when his wife, Isabelle de Baviere, introduced an outlandish headgear sometimes a yard high. Imagine present-day beauties laying aside the spreading affairs of today and adopting the peaked headgear of Queen Isabelle, with the corresponding costume. The illustration shows how Mrs. George Barnett, one of America's handsomest matrons, would appear. Mrs. Barnett was formerly one of the famous Montague sisters of Virginia, whose fame for beauty extended beyond the boundaries of that state. She married Basil Gordon, and after his death wedded Major Barnett, of the United States Marine Corps.

IN ISABELLE'S DAY

In Queen Isabelle's day women's undergarments were of coarse serge. Linen chemises were extremely rare in the days of that queen, who was the only woman of her court possessing them. She boasted of two. Later, when they became more popular, the ladies proudly opened their skirts in such a manner as to reveal just a glimpse of the linen chemise.

Mrs. Barnett would wear a skirt deeply trimmed with ermine. Her dress, fitting rather neatly about the waist, would be made, probably, of some expensive silk, embroidered with gold. The most striking part of her attire would be the headpiece, with which other ladies would vie, each trying to surpass the other in height and elegance.

In the days of Queen Isabelle, husbands—as now—were complaining wretches, and they complained so loudly against the extravagance of this headpiece that priests and monks began to denounce the extravagance of women. On April 16, 1429, a Franciscan monk ascended the pulpit of the church of St. Genevieve in Paris, at 5 o'clock in the morning, and began a sermon against the tall hats which lasted until 11 o'clock. He continued the series ten days.

How would the great beauty of European royalty, Princess Henry of Prussia, appear in a costume such as was worn by Marguerite of Valois? French fashions in the days of Henry III became unusually extravagant. Princess Henry, if she should adopt this dress, would wear a whaleboned bodice, fitting tightly, and a great skirt, swelling balloon-like.

The bodice would be cut low, but she would wear an immense starched collar rising from her shoulders. She would deck herself with necklaces and earrings of gold or silver set with precious stones, and from her neck might hang a chain dangling with a small mirror. Her gown might be of white satin, trimmed with tinsel, or of salmon or orange and black silk. The dress would be covered with jewels. It is stated

and placed them, with several ostrich plumes, in her hair. Louis XVI came in, and greatly admired his wife, saying he had never seen her look so well. Almost immediately feathers came in fashion, not in France only, but throughout Europe. But when, shortly afterward, Marie Antoinette sent a portrait of herself, wearing large feathers as a headpiece, to her mother, the Empress Maria Theresa returned it. "There has been, no doubt, some mistake," wrote Maria Theresa. "I received the portrait of an actress, not that of a queen; I am expecting the right one."

There is no doubt Miss Maxine Elliott would make a sensation in the dress of this period. Miss Elliott would wear a gown of silk, opening in front, trimmed with ruffles of white linen or muslin. Underneath she would wear a skirt of another color, made rather short and trimmed with flounces. Her sleeves would be tight and short, and trimmed similarly with flounces. The body would be made so low that Miss Elliott's shoulders would be revealed. To be consistent with the style, she would wear immense earrings, bracelets and satin shoes with jeweled buckles. Her hat, resting on hair dressed immensely high, would be small and laden with great feathers.

Simpler and more beautiful is that costume which came in vogue during the reign of Louis Philippe. That these dresses would be particularly becoming to the young ladies of Fifth avenue just as well as to the buds of the Faubourg St. Germain is evidenced by the charming picture Miss Elizabeth Shirley, the famous Kentucky belle, would make in the wide-hooped, pale-colored dress of the period.

A STUNNING COSTUME

Were Miss Shirley to walk into a ballroom in her native state in a pale pink costume, with its low bodice, tight-fitting waist, and skirt trimmed with artificial roses, she undoubtedly would eclipse the other belles, so far as striking costume is concerned.

Particularly would this be true if she secured a fabric of any of the colors favored during the reign of Louis Philippe, when faint hues of pink, of lilac, of "early dawn" were favored. Then there were fabrics of "Russian green," "pure Ethiopian," "Marengo black" and wine-reds. Miss Shirley would wear no sleeves and very short gloves. Her hair, parted in the middle, would fall in curls by the side of her face.

Should she wish to adopt a dress of the extreme fashion of the old period she might—if she could—have it made of a fabric of spun glass; for the ultra-fashionable ladies of the French court wore gowns of this material.