

FAMOUS BEAUTIES OF TWO CENTURIES



Mme. Devielle
Portrait by Greuze.



Countess of
Faversham
Portrait by Hoppner

The Paris
Exhibition
that Affords
Comparison
with the
Past

AMERICANS touring Europe this summer—including, of course, their adored Paris—are enjoying one debauch of beauty which, in all likelihood, will never be offered to the world again.

In the Tennis Court of the Tuileries, which has been splendidly decorated for the occasion, are assembled 100 portraits of the handsomest and most distinguished women, painted by the most distinguished artists of the eighteenth century.

Here, because of the new entente cordiale subsisting between the French and British governments, are grouped famous beauties of the two nations—the lovely faces of the women who, living in the most elegant periods of the most elegant European courts, were found most admirable by such critics of beauty as the modern devotee can only envy in their prodigal affections.

Some of those women, with the faces of angels, beloved more than the angels they rivaled, earned from the populace the hatred people gave to demons. Some, with beauty surpassing that of queens, took the places of queens, who dreaded and detested them.

Today their fascinating faces are gazing down upon a long succession of other, modern beauties, framed in other, modern fashions, who look fearlessly into the mocking depths of their brilliant, painted eyes, yet scarcely dare turn to the glance of the living men near them and challenge a comparison.

FRANCE has designed the exhibition of the unique collection as an aid, in its earnings, for the support of the widows, children and aged relatives of her sailors—a worthy, philanthropic object, and one peculiarly fit for the loveliness of many of the originals, who, in their time, had more than a little to do with sending forth the battling fleets that made widows and orphans enough.

Royal ministers, like Sir Edward Grey, the earl of Crewe and Lewis Harcourt, consented to act as patrons; the queen of England accepted patronage of the exhibition as an honor; Lord Rosebery and the earl of Plymouth lent their names to it.

With such auspices, the two governments, famous museums, civic and private collections were ready to open their jealously guarded galleries.

Thousands of canvases could have been secured. But the infallible French taste and judgment in matters of art was not to be seduced into any omnium gathering of portraits. The determination to adhere to a rigid selection of no more than 100 was held to firmly.

Only two considerations were permitted to

influence the choice: One was the resolve to secure representative canvases of the most representative artists of the period; the other was the desire to let the world of 1909 study the beauty and charm of the most famous women of that romantic and lavish era.

The contrast and comparison of the old and the new order of woman's charms are inevitable. And the curious effect in the minds of all the spectators is to strip from both the old and the new loveliness the adventitious charms of youth as well as costume and leave for appraisement only the essentials of features, complexion and expression.

With such a standard, the unveiled eye might range through a modern ballroom and find but few among the belles whose attractions would prove dazzling. The world's Helens and Cleopatras would be found only in the halo of tradition.

Of such a quality of fairness, however, is the famous beauty of Lady Pole-Carew, whose

classic regularity of feature has enabled her to hold her eminence for years among the modern belles of Britain.

There is a calm stateliness in her features, with a placid serenity in her gaze, that brings back to memory the blue splendor of the Aegean and the marble grandeur of some Attic frieze.

How does the faultless perfection of her lauded face compare with those so eagerly limned by Gainsborough, Greuze, Raeburn, Hoppner, Lawrence, Reynolds and Romney?

How, too, do the varied charms of all those fair dead women compare with those of the living ones who stare back at them now, the daughters of democracy, who are the latest product of the new luxury and the new civilization beyond the seas?

In one respect, at least, the women who are past excel the women who are present. Strangely, when the imagination dwells upon the hauteur and pride so uniformly reported of these hand-

some aristocrats of old—a pride which the guilotine alone was able to lower, yet could never really abase—every one of these famed portraits in the Tennis Court of the Tuileries is exquisitely human, often infinitely gentle, in expression.

Life, and the rest of living, speaks from many of those sparkling eyes; love, and the need of love, seems to hunger from the faces of all.

When the visitor stops in quick-breathed admiration before some exceptionally attractive countenance, he is instantly impressed with the animation so vitally present in the portrait and the lack of it, relatively, in the living faces about him in the gallery throng.

Can the handsome yet immobile features of our modern, admired Lady Pole-Carew really bear comparison with so brilliant and alluring a countenance as Mme. Devielle, painted by Greuze? We extol, and we turn away from the admirable Englishwoman of the twentieth century with never a stir of the pulses, as though



Mme. de Pompadour
Portrait by Boucher



Lady Pole-Carew
England's Present Day Beauty

we have had the privilege of applauding a sculptor's masterpiece.

But when we behold that sweet yet strong face of the woman on whose loveliness Greuze was so fortunate as to look with never a faint reproach for playing Acteon, Diana herself seems to be incarnate before us, with such a touch of gentleness as might account for her willingness to let men enjoy her fresh young beauty.

Is it a question of the superiority of French or English features? We can compare with that exquisite portrait of Mme. Devielle the picture of the countess of Faversham, by Hoppner, loaned from the collection of the earl of Dartmouth.

She looks typically English, her features large and very clearly cut—just the healthy, handsome girl one sees nowadays among the daughters of the well born there, but with the advantage of having her hair in a waving mass above her brow and falling in thick curls at the nape of her perfectly proportioned neck. But she can no more hope to rival such a glowing poem of youth and beauty as Greuze has pictured than she can hope to come to life again and smile at the compliments they used to offer her.

Is it, most important of all, a contrast between the women of the world that is gone by and of the world we know now?

WIT VS. BEAUTY

Is it a question as to what were the charms of the women who could sway a kingdom by the sheer power of their loveliness and their wit?

Well, here is the Pompadour. She was a dashing piece; no doubt of that. But was she really beautiful? Glance around among the scores of girl faces that show in the throng of spectators. There are a dozen quite as attractive, and with just that emphatically healthy, luxury-loving configuration of the lower face. There are half a dozen who are prettier, and, perhaps, one or two beside whom Mme. de Pompadour would have appeared immitigably plain.

But few, if any, of the living faces display the roguish archness and the unbending ambition that are detectable in the countenance of the girl who was able to rival queens. History, supplemented by Boucher, the artist who painted her from the life and to the life, pays tribute to her brains rather than her beauty.

What of the famous, or the infamous, Du Barry? Here she is, also, from the brush of Drouais; her bold eyes a good deal bigger than eyes happen to be in the human reality, but a very speaking likeness, nevertheless.

Clever—oh, clever as any woman's face can be, or any man's, for that matter; but beautiful? Not by any means. Those two women who managed to make the kingdom of France a byword and a shame were far from being little sisters to Madame Venus. The best that might be said of the Pompadour is that she may have been a cousin to Hebe; as for Du Barry, unless her artist libeled her, she might have belonged to the family of Minerva.

For sheer loveliness the portraits from the brush of Greuze are inimitable, his delicate "Young Girl with a Lamb" breathing the very soul of girlish health and daintiness, for all that it is semi-nude and uncompromising in its reality of the flesh.