

THE CENTENARY OF THE SLENDER WOMAN



The Slender figure of 1802

Back 100 Years We Must Go to Find the Parallels for Our Present Fad in Feminine Figures



The style which was famed in 1806



Still Slender in 1806



Slenderness Quite Pronounced in 1804

THERE is no novelty in announcing to the world that fashions change as regards dress, and to the close observer of popular taste it is no great revelation to say that fashions in the women themselves change just as surely as the mode of the garments that deck them.

However, it may not have been observed that the present fashion-plate woman, the enormously long, slender and willowy lady, who is commonly regarded as a distortion peculiar to this decade, is really no more than a reversion in type to the fashion-plate woman of just one hundred years ago.

The belle of impossibly long legs and astounding height was as much in favor in the first ten years of the nineteenth century as she

has come to be in the first ten years of this. There have been occasional journalistic comments on the increasing height of our women and some caricatures on the same subject, of late, but no one seems to realize that it is by no means a new or novel tendency.

If one were to go into the sociological conditions of the first decade of the last century and compare it with the corresponding period in this, he could doubtless find a common cause for this taste for long-limbed beauties. Let that pass for the present, however. It will be apparent enough from a study of old paintings and plates that the taste was once a vogue and that the liking for the impossible woman is, like most things in taste, no new thing under the sun.

IN THE fifteenth century Botticelli painted long, slender women, but they were not the stately type that troubles the modern anatomist, as he marvels at art and fashion-plate creations. They had a snaky aspect that was probably meant to be spiritual grace. Then again, Burne-Jones delighted in the attenuated; but even his women were not in any way comparable to the forms which are popular at this date, and were more or less in vogue a hundred years ago.

Besides, these men never actually molded the taste of their contemporaries. Their work was rather individualistic and not at all representative. Whatever the artistic merits of a fashion plate may be, at least it does show the popular taste in forms as well as in dress. In this country fifty years ago, and still earlier, it was the popular thing to call a tall slender woman "a lean, bony creature," and to dub the little round ladies as properly plump and comely. To be at all admired a woman had to be well rounded out—fat, we should now call it—and as many remember, every device was employed to give the impression of squariness and girth in the proper anatomical locations. Huge bustles and overskirts were in fashion, and the strangest part of it was that the women seemed to fit into the fashions admirably.

There seems, in fact, to be some psychological connection between taste and physical development as the fashions in women change. If there is a cry for little round women, we seem to have them in abundance. And now that there is a tendency to worship the tall and slender "scarescrows," our grandmothers would have called them, all the girls appearing to be growing up above their brothers and to be losing hips and all else in the endeavor of the physique to meet the demands of taste. Perhaps it is the change in form, or the warning of a change, that sets the fashions. Perhaps, under certain recurring conditions, women grow tall and lean, thus establishing taste; and under other conditions, they take the opposite tack and favor follows the alteration.

DR. REICH'S OPINION

Since we have tumbled into the speculative vein, it might be well to give the opinions of some one more accustomed to accurate speculation. Dr. Ernst Reich, in his studies of American women, has something to say of the women of the period which opened the last century. He declares that it was a pioneer age; that in America, especially, the people were just beginning to realize that there was a "hinterland" on the opposite side of the Alleghenies, and the whole nation was either in a state of motion or of unrest from other causes.

As a result of this the women were taken away from established homes; in fact, there were no homes and the feminine part of the population was half unsexed. Women were more masculine; they had to face men's tests and trials as pioneers. The colonists who had adopted the ease and luxury of Europe began once more to throw it off and undertake new things. So the women could not afford to be little, delicate and pudgy. They grew tall and lithe. This is only a theory, but it looks like a plausible one. It was an age of transition, when the young nation was strengthening itself to face new trials, and was by no means in that state of quiet and comfort in which a people can afford to cultivate the graces, coax delicacy and fragility into the forms of their women, and make round, chubby little dolls of them. Fashion then was only the reflection of a demand for tall, strong, almost stalwart creatures, to meet the needs of the age. In France it was much the same. The country had just come out of a terrific turmoil, in which all courtly graces and beauty ideals had been trampled under foot. The legends of the empire war, strife and conflict, Napoleon and the women of the decadent nobility had no more standing in the new republic than their husbands. The legends of the empire war, strife and conflict, Napoleon and the women of the decadent nobility had no more standing in the new republic than their husbands. Since that era of extreme democracy, France has had ample opportunity to revive the charms of femininity and to cultivate the courtly graces, in spite of frequent changes of government. It is hardly in this country, after the war of 1812, that the nation felt more assured in its position. Society cultivated centers of the east, became once more what was a fairly permanent institution and the old taste and elegance of colonial days were once again revived; hence the reversion to the taste for a more solid and the disappearance of the long-limbed, lank beauties of the unsettled period. A big story was no other justification for those im-

possible tastes at the beginning of the last century. It would have been enough that they were popular in France. For everything French was law to the States in those days. However, the turmoil in this country was sufficient to give rise to a craze for women of masculine height and masculine lack of feminine charm. Here is what a historian says of the age:

"In America, at this turn of the century, matters seemed in a pretty bad way; the rage for gambling and the prevalence of lotteries had had a blasting effect; speculation and jobbery had become regular trades. Many came to doubt the wisdom of separation from England. The yellow fever had afflicted the seaports for years and lessened their commerce, already subjected to one unbenign embargo and soon to be by another. American ships were preyed upon and pillaged on the high seas by ships of all nations; whip masters and ship owners were desperate. The shocking and universal prevalence of dueling alarmed all thoughtful folk; it appeared to the timid that all the really great statesmen, soldiers, lawyers and gentlemen, would kill off each other."

To come back to the conditions that developed a taste for tall women in France, such as we see in these early illustrations, we are told by Reich that there were at least fifty women who served in the French army toward

the latter end of the eighteenth century, and that scores of women adopted male attire and held their own with men in duels and similar exercises.

It was only a few years before the reaction came in France and the women of the empire came to be normal, feminine creatures; so again the taste changed.

Now for our modern reversion to the tall woman, the masculine woman and impossible, long-legged woman. After our women and our taste in women had relapsed into the old romantic type of the round little woman of many dimples and delicate hands, it seems that nothing in the way of internal strife could shake off the courtly spell until the season came for the question of women's rights and the fitness of woman to be agitated. The athletic women, the women who have been public figures in public life, have set a new standard for fe-



Far from Stout in 1808

male activity, and the old ideal of the imposing figure, height and near-masculine virility has once more crept into our feminine tastes. Reich says: "The United States has evolved that very specialized product which we at once recognize unmistakably as the American woman." The Independent woman, strong in body and mind,

has come to be the ideal with us Americans, which is evident from the popular art portrayals of the species. In her imposing height and commanding dignity she expresses physically these attributes of independence and strength. In an age when women are riding strenuously, walking strenuously and threatening to outdo men in athletic prowess, we could not expect our artists to express their ideals in drawings of small women, dimpled and smoothed into courtly little dolls by lives of perfect ease and relaxation. It is doubtful, indeed, if there ever were such American women; but the domination of the old-European court standards of what constituted feminine charm overpowered our less assertive artists and literary folk into a devotion for the petite which is in no sense American. This reversion to the extreme type of a hundred years ago, which appears in the illustrations here given as something little short of caricature, is perhaps the mere assertion of our rights to have a type of our own and to admit it in our own way. The tall, graceful, commanding woman is the symbol of the new woman, the self-assertive creature that is becoming a factor in every country, but is nevertheless still a distinctive American type.

An Eastern Legend

ACCORDING to the Bengali legend, there once lived on the banks of the river Ganga a rishi, or sage, in whose hut, made of palm leaves, there was a mouse which became a favorite with the seer and was endowed by him with the gift of speech.

After a while the mouse, having been frightened by the rishi into a cat; then, alarmed by dogs, into a dog; then into an ape, then, into a bear then into an elephant, and finally, being still discontented with its lot, into a beautiful maiden, to whom the sage gave the name of "Postomani," or "poppy-seed lady."

One day, while tending her plants, the king approached the rishi's cottage, and was invited to rest and refresh himself by Postomani, who offered him some delicious fruit. The king, however, struck by the girl's beauty, refused to eat until she told him her parentage.

Postomani, to deceive the king, told him she was a princess whom the rishi had found in the woods and had brought up. The result was that the king made love to the girl, and they were married by the holy sage. She was treated as a favorite queen, and was very happy; but one day, while standing by a well she turned giddy, fell into the water and died. The rishi then appeared before the king and begged him not to give way to consuming grief, assuring him that the late queen was not of royal blood. She had been a mouse, and, according to her own wish, I changed her successively into a cat, a dog, an ape, a bear, an elephant and a lovely girl. Let her body remain in the well, all in the well with earth. Out of her flesh and bones will grow a tree, which shall be called after her "posto," that is, the "poppy tree." From this tree will be obtained a drug called opium, which will be either swallowed or smoked till the end of time. The opium swallower or smoker will have one quality of each of the animals to which Postomani was transformed. He will be mischievous like a mouse; fond of milk, like a cat; quarrelsome, like a dog; filthy, like an ape; savage, like a bear; stubborn, like an elephant, and high-tempered, like a queen."

WHY THEIR TERROR OF THE CAMERA?



Harry Lehr, one of the Most Rabid Anti-Camera Men

Mrs. Ralph Thomas, Who Took Eight Years to get Used to the Camera

BOLDLY advancing into the open or artfully reconnoitering for a snapshot while they merged themselves with the throngs of passengers on the dock, the numerous corps of photographers who had swarmed to the waterside of Plymouth, England, on the arrival from New York of the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse, sought to catch the coveted likeness of Mrs. Ralph Hill Thomas as she moved from place to place with alacrity greater than theirs, provokingly bent on foiling them.

Perhaps it was the experience she gained while divorcing Frank Gould, and perhaps it was the previous eight years in which she had figured as the quarry of the dry-plate brigade, that cured her of any real shyness of the lenses. It was very different with her bridegroom.

He grew warm; he grew hot; he became incandescent; he spluttered to the police, who greatly grinned. The photographers, amply baffled by his wife and some passengers whose alliance she won

with her cheerfully piquant laughter, persisted a la Paul Jones, who announced that he had just begun to get interested. Then Mr. Thomas opened fire with both batteries and sailed into them, shaking his fist and vociferating:

"I've a good mind to throw you and your cameras overboard!"

But the police moved a little closer, grinning a little more; and he didn't.

Of course, they failed to get the photograph. Mrs. Thomas took care of that. But their exploit had not been wholly futile, for the educational standpoint of their profession. They had seen with their own eyes, heard with their own ears and almost gone overboard with their own cameras in the presence of the raging American afflicted with the newest and most violent of all temporary dementias, cameraphobia.

A strictly modern disorder with a selected class of victims, who, when they have become chronic cases, are diagnosed as being camera shy.

THE affliction, in its less violent stage, is one common to a moller segment of humanity much admired in the last century during several decades succeeding the invention of Daguerre, and respectively reluctant to have their features exploited for the praise or criticism of the world at large. There are still some old-fashioned people who prefer their privacy and seclusion, and are perfectly normal in their bias, because they choose privacy for its own sake and consistently adhere to it, as disdaining of the seductions of fame as they are averse to the annoyance of notoriety.

That condition was really normal in the nineteenth century, when civilization's best opinion indured it, although civilization in the main didn't practice it. In the twentieth, it is becoming so rare as to constitute an abnormality, if nothing more.

The true cameraphobics, or haters of the camera, belong to the class who will give dinner, polite speeches, \$100 bills, the glad hand or anything else that happens to come convenient, for the sake of being photographed for publication, so long as the accompanying comment, extolls their horses, their wealth, their social pre-eminence, anything that is theirs. The instant they happen to be divorced, or rob a bank, or break a speed law and macerate a pushcart man, or provoke a riotous mob, their consequences are disagreeable, cameraphobia claims them for its own, and they yearn to kick a photographer in the slats.

Usually, the affliction is temporary, the patient reverting to his normal self and passing on to photographers cigarettes flavored with his monogram in gold leaf, the minute society is willing to forget that he happened to bite an ear off a policeman. But occasionally, as in the sad case of William Waldorf Astor, the subject stays so blamed mad that he forsakes home and country, builds a stone boundary around himself over in England and announces that all invading photographers will be shot or ought to be.

Mr. Astor was among the earliest of the chronic cameraphobes that developed in the United States; but, being of a retiring and unpropitious temperament, he detonated only once, and then, as the United States has realized more gratefully with passing years, quit his country for his country's good.

An equally pronounced case of camera-shy was that of William Montgomery, the Pittsburg banker, who, throughout his long career in association with the late Senator Quay, was prepared to smash any camera that came within range of him. He finally landed in jail, where the light is not adapted to snapshots. He has since lived a

life as retired as that of his fellow-cameraphobe in England, and about as much beloved.

Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, who suffers from recurrent cameraphobia, according to his proclivity for divorce or other strictly sensational society stunts, carries much of the responsibility for making the disorder fashionable. A little while before his wife, who was Elsie French, decided he wasn't worth living with and brought suit for divorce, the photographers at Newport sought to prepare against the rainy day. Alfred Gwynne pitched into them hammer and tongs and managed to smash several cameras in the course of his more violent attacks.

The impression then went abroad that any person tolerated in society, and not a woman, who could show nerve enough to smash a camera held by a small, non-combative photographer, would demonstrate conclusively that he was a real man, if not a gentleman. Harry Lehr succeeded in giving a somewhat crude imitation of cameraphobia at Newport; but nobody took his demonstration any more seriously than they take Harry; so he quit, and reverted to his normal, lovely self, and hasn't been naughty again.

MORGAN'S ATTACKS

J. Pierpont Morgan, whose preference is for bronze busts in the fashion of Augustus Caesar rather than for photos, has had one or two violent attacks, the worst occurring when he returned a year or so ago from Europe and proposed to chuck cameras and photographers overboard, just as Mr. Thomas did this summer at Plymouth. It is not believed that Mr. Thomas' impulse was suggested by Mr. Morgan's, because expert observers of the affliction note that the propinquity of water seems to provoke the sufferer to prefer eliminating the photographer by drowning rather than by manslaughter.

The only foreigner thus far infected was the virtuous and haughty Count Szechenyi, while he was on the eve of winning the millions to which Miss Gladys Vanderbilt was attached. He shoved the photographer off an automobile step and tried to smash the camera, with every symptom of cameraphobia rampant, down even to the typical detail of forgetting to straighten the points of his mustache for a period of five minutes.

The more violent phases of cameraphobia have been much less frequent of late in society, mainly because the cameras, which are valuable, are now entrusted to photographers who are more near the size of the subjects to be photographed. It has seldom, if ever, happened that any gentleman in society lost his self-control in the presence of a camera when the photographer was within an inch of being as big as he was.