

**FASHION IN PARIS: THE VARIOUS
PHASES OF FEMININE TASTE AND
AESTHETICS FROM THE
REVOLUTION TO THE END OF THE
XIXTH CENTURY**

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Fashion in Paris: The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from the Revolution to the End of the XIXth Century by Octave Uzanne & Mary Loyd & Francois Courboin

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OCTAVE UZANNE & MARY LOYD & FRANCOIS COURBOIN

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INTRODUCTION



Books on Fashion will be sought and welcomed, to all time and in every sphere, with special favour, because they are both recreative and instructive, and because everybody believes him or herself capable of enjoying, of understanding, and of interpreting them.

They rouse general curiosity. To women they supply the history of their banner, of their guild, of their own versatility, Men, gazing on their pages, seek to call up the memory of dead charms, and their sad thoughts stray to those far distant joys which have faded out for ever. The children open their great wondering eyes on the gay shadows still touched with life's own colours; and the old return to youth, and feel their dead passions stir again, as they gaze on the sunny mirage of the past, which starts into light under the magic-lantern of these coloured plates.

If we consider France alone—the country which, for so many years, created fashion, and imposed the eternal laws of costume on neighbouring nations—we may fairly say that the art of dress has never been more interesting than since it became democratised, and thus grew general.

The Revolution, which overthrew, with no useful result, so many traditions, and set up humanitarian theories far exceeding in number the really beneficent reforms it conferred on the people—that Revolution which dug so mighty an abyss between two societies, and from which the history of our uncouth modern civilisation takes its date—the Revolution, when it severed the links of all French tradition, gave birth to a new conception of the æsthetics of dress, of which the fashions of the present century—so extraordinary in their number, so near and yet so far away already—are the logical outcome.

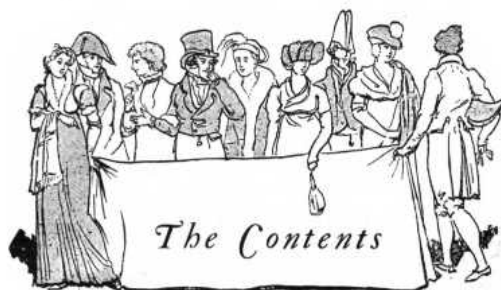
In the beginning these garments of a newly liberated people left the body free, followed its outlines, and were well-nigh transparent in texture. Their inventors drew their inspiration from nature and the

pagan mythology ; they aimed at concealing nothing, and followed the harmonious lines of Grecian beauty ; then, under the Empire, we see them, less frivolous already, growing more Roman, and leaning towards the cramped lines of military uniform. Under the Restoration, the fashions, like the neo-medieval literature of the time, grew formal, affecting the stiff lines and starched manners of a sham Troubadourism. The year 1830 brought more of the Renaissance ; dress was more lissome, more voluptuous ; never were fashions more feminine, more subtle, more original, more exquisitely artistic. Later, exaggeration began, increased, and grew worse and worse, till it reached the monstrous caricature of the crinoline and the monkey-like trappings of the Second Empire. Later than 1870 we can come to no clear judgment concerning our taste in dress, because a space of more than fifteen years must elapse before any definite opinion can be formed of shapes and colours as a whole. An ancient fashion is always a curiosity. A fashion slightly out of date is an absurdity ; the reigning fashion alone, in which life stirs, commands us by its grace and charm, and stands beyond discussion. These successive fashions, so strange, so curious from many points of view, we have endeavoured to determine in the course of this work, as we marshal them before our readers' gaze, amidst those various surroundings of Paris amongst which, in the course of these last hundred years, they have moved and had their being. To save the illustrations from the stamp of commonplaceness, peculiar to the "Fashion Plate," we have desired to make the background of each appropriate, showing forth the architecture against which fashion stood outlined, whether in haunts of elegance or of mere pleasure.

Each of the coloured illustrations is a faithful witness, a complete representation, of some corner in Paris, vanished now, or utterly changed. Fashion figures therein only as a logical and indispensable accessory, and all the interest is centred in the background of the picture, which reveals one of the most fashionable aspects of our ancient city.

The nineteenth century has already passed into the domain of history. I have thought it would be interesting to bring the panorama of feminine costume during these hundred years into the compass of a single volume ; the changes of fashion during this interval have been greater and more varied than could be imagined.

OCTAVE UZANNE.



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ERRATUM


PLATE 6—For "In" read "Of"



CHAPTER I

THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

LICENTIOUSNESS OF DRESS AND HABITS UNDER THE DIRECTORY



AT THE birth of the French Directory, anarchy, utter and complete—an anarchy which brought freedom and consolation in its train—succeeded the sanguinary rule of the “Rasoir National.” Everything, even the Empire of the Fair, had been swept away by the Revolution. Clubs and street gatherings had, and inevitably, wiped out every sign of the *salon*, and it was generally recognised that all the wit, the grace, and the refinement of France had disappeared, engulfed in the sanguinary frenzy of the revolutionary populace. The reaction of the Thermidor was to remake and reconstitute all things, to blot out even the hideous memories of the Terror.

It seemed natural, after so prolonged a period of constraint, that pleasure, gaiety, pastimes of every kind, should raise their heads in every quarter. Confusion reigned unchecked. Men lived, so to speak, in a kind of moral interregnum; delighted to forget their sorrows, forget

themselves, intoxicate their senses; life grew dissolute, virtue facile, and not a thought was given even to the brutality of the means employed. Women, for the most part, awoke to the delightful fact that they had just regained possession of their mightiest weapons. Nothing had so enraged the sex as the absurd attempt made by the Revolution, to introduce the severity or the ferocity of the early Roman laws into our customs. Terrified by this neo-republican austerity, French women strove, by dint of a depravity greater even than that under the monarchy, to oppose this sham Spartan severity; they set themselves to charm, and their seductive power grew mightier than the most rigid laws, and set at nought all edicts for the regulation of matters of virtue and morality.

The Directory replaced Woman on the mythological throne of love and beauty. She became the wanton sovereign of a panting, fevered, tossing, restless kingdom, a fair-green where appetite and vile passions, petty gains, sordid amours, and every merchandise from which good feeling shrinks, were exposed for sale and barter.

The art of living became the art of pleasing. Courtesy was looked on as a mere prejudice. Young men, addressing ladies, would keep their hats upon their heads. If an old man showed greater civility, the youths made game of the old fellow. No woman thanked a man for picking up her fan. If he bowed to her, she did not return his salutation. She went her way, a joyous healthy creature, ogling the handsome men, laughing in the faces of the ugly. There was no forbidden fruit within this Pagan paradise. The tactics of the game of love went no farther than to arouse desire, and, almost there and then, to gratify it. Each person conjugated the verb *I desire, thou desirest, we desire*, at their own sweet will, and the impersonal form was never pronounced, so strong was the preference for an immediate use of the imperfect or the past. Divorce was ready to hand, for the freedom of those whom jealousy still tortured. Marriage, according to Cambacérés' terrible definition in the Code, was no longer considered to be anything but the "action of nature," and this civil compact was looked on as purely temporary, any incompatibility of temper sufficing to break the bonds originally knitted for the sake of physical convenience. "The woman of that period," write the Gon-



1797

court brothers, "passes from one husband to another, seeking her pleasure, unbinding and re-knotting her girdle, moving hither and thither like some charming piece of merchandise—a wife, so long as that does not weary her—a mother, so long as the fact amuses her. . . . Husbands hurry from the arms of one woman to the embraces of another, seeking concubinage in the conjugal state, and the satisfaction of appetite in constant re-marriage. Couples divorce for no reason at all. . . . They marry and divorce, break marriages to marry again, without a touch of retrospective jealousy on the man's part, or modesty on the woman's; and the wedlock of those days would seem modelled on the procedure in a horse-breeding establishment, where divers mates are tried."



1797

In dancing, especially, the reaction, even on the morrow of the day of deliverance, was sudden, impetuous, tremendous. Scarcely were the scaffolds overthrown, before public balls were opened, in every corner of the capital. The joyous strains of violin and clarinet, of flute and tambourine, summoned the survivors of the Terror to the pleasures of the dance, and they came in their thousands. Duval, in his "Recollections," gives a full list of these various terpsichorean haunts. First in order comes the splendid garden which had belonged to Farmer-General Boutin, who, with all his colleagues, was executed "for having watered the national tobacco." This its proprietors dubbed with the Italian name of Tivoli. It was the first to open its gates to the public. Another platform was installed in the Jardin Marboeuf, at the end of the Avenue des Champs Elysées. At both these places, gay couples twirled merrily.

Other public balls were opened in swift succession. There was dancing at the Elysée National, once the Elysée Bourbon, where the orchestra was led with extraordinary success by the negro Julien, the Musard of this period. Hither delightful expeditions were made by water. Then there was a ball in the Jardin des Capucines, much frequented by the *modistes* of the Rue St. Honoré and the Rue Neuve-