

# Are clothes modern? An essay on contemporary apparel

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Bernard Rudofsky

***are clothes modern?***

An essay on contemporary apparel

Paul Theobald 1947

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To Philip L. Goodwin

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### *Acknowledgments*

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### *Advertisement*

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It was to be expected that the documenting of a book on dress would meet with unusual difficulties. Not only is there no costume library in the United States, but the institution of copyright prohibits the free use of modern illustrative material. For instance, such a veritable mine of pictorial documents as the bi-monthly *Vogue* magazine had to be left untouched—no permission to reproduce a single picture could be procured. Hence, this book fails to show some of the most significant pictorial testimonies.

And another point: Some arguments were treated sketchily and some conclusions were left to be drawn by the reader himself. The reason is that the author does not feel too confident about the public's willingness to tolerate opinions which shake its complacency.



*Are clothes modern?*





Next morning the prince went to his father, the King, and said to him: "No one shall be my wife but she whose foot this golden slipper fits." Then were the two sisters glad, for they had pretty feet. The eldest went with the shoe into her room and wanted to try it on, and her mother stood by. But she could not get her big toe into it, and the shoe was too small for her. Then her mother gave her a knife and said, "Cut the toe off; when thou art Queen thou wilt no more need to go on foot." The maiden cut the toe off, forced the foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the King's son. Then he took her on his horse as his bride and rode away with her.\*

Cinderella, the tale of frustration and competition, of fetishism and mutilation, is a catalog of cruelties, and, as such, represents a fairly good summation of the components of dress.

This charming story of human perversions is not a forbidden book. It is whispered at bedtime to eager children and sinks deeply into their sleepy but

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\*From Grimm's Household Tales. The story continues with the prince's discovery of the fraud. Blood, streaming from the bride's shoe, has dyed her white stockings red. Most American children are unaware of these bloody complications since they are fed a wholesome vegetarian pumpkin-coach version of Cinderella. The purge apparently began in the late nineties when the mother's resourcefulness and the ensuing surgery fell victims to the censor. The pigeons followed; their symbolism also seems to have been inappropriate. A Boston edition of Grimm's tales dismisses the Cinderella story altogether; its introduction states with grim satisfaction, ". . . when the objectionable stories have been thrown out, there remains a goodly number."<sup>1</sup>

The behaviour of fashion addicts, a term which applies practically to everybody who has reached adolescence, is significant. From the first phase of timid desire for the adoption of a fad, through the sheer religious devotion, as demonstrated by the punctilious care for the detail of the fashion, to the sudden boredom and physical horror for an outlived vogue, we have the perfect analogy of the unravelment of the phases of courtship: craving and devotion for the love object, and its rejection after wish-fulfillment. In fact, nothing shows better the nature of dress than this resemblance. Sometimes, when the excitement of a new fashion flares up, symbols of old become miraculously alive, strange cruelties and mutilations are accepted in homage to a fashion idol, which would, were their real nature fully understood, scare the wits out of its adherents.



## *Typography of modesty*

Man which glories in his raiment is like unto a robber that glories in the brand of iron wherewith he is branded, since it was Adam's sin that rendered garments necessary.

St. Bernard

"What were Adam's clothes? A horny skin covered his body, and the Lord's cloud surrounded him at all times. But after he ate from the fruits of the tree his horny skin was wrested from him and the cloud melted away. He looked at his nakedness and hid from the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Thus, the unfortunate incident which started the clothing problem with its never ending calamities is pictured in legend. Great as Adam's annoyance must have been over the loss of his ingenious shell and aura, it is not clearly understandable what made him so promptly realize its moral implications. What made the flayed Adam think that his changed appearance had reduced him to a permanent state of sin? Maybe he sensed that he deserved some punishment.

However that may be, the legend's picture of the fallen first man as a kind of peeled shrimp is more convincing than the more popular version in the Old Testament. Both are fables, quaint and moralistic, apparently too remote to burn our ears. However, they must seem to be quite real to the child who gets his basic orientation of this world in Sunday school. Modesty, a sensation so complex and irrational, is imbued in his mind by way of allegories which in themselves are equally irrational. Modesty—to be specific, the Jewish-Christian variety of corporeal modesty—was born from sin. The new virtue, tainted by origin and circumstance, was intended to repair the irreparable by cramming Man down in a substitute shell and by garnishing him with a mental fog. But apparently the garment which the old Adam shed is irretrievable, and the new artificial skin cracks alternately or simultaneously in a dozen places, sometimes to the delight of its wearer. It is noteworthy that though modesty has often punished humanity severely by inflicting unnecessary hardships, it has just as often given the most exquisite pleasures to its non-conformists.







Irrelevant as the childlike conception of the accidental birth of modesty seems, the fact that it found its way into theological argument and consequently into religion itself, presents us with an important cue to our present-day attitude towards clothes. Puritanical society is notable for its adherence to old-testamentary ideology, though behaviour seldom follows the theory. It is somewhat comforting to observe that life has laws of its own, which do not always coincide with moral or theological axioms. Generation after generation, official providers of enlightenment and solace are forced to revise their notions with regard to modesty, and to adjust themselves as best as they can so as not to lose contact with their community.

Adam's first realization after he lost his hide, was his incompleteness. Our civilization shares his feelings to an amazing degree. We do not blush to affirm that man without clothes is ludicrous, nor that he is inferior to the equally unclothed but inoffensive animal. It is therefore not surprising to see man turning to the animals and borrowing their skin, hair and feathers to patch up his natural defect. The horny skin, which in mythology and folk legend exists as a mere parable, becomes a reality to which every costume history testifies.

Topography has often borrowed its terms from human anatomy. Crests and necks are common in geographic language. Sinuous lines in both earthly and human landscape have provoked poetic comment. And the ever changing pattern of clouds, which blanket the plains and crown the summits, may be linked to the equally changing but ever-present haze of corporeal modesty which clings to the ridges and valleys of the human body.

Viewed from a more distant standpoint, the appearance of the cloudy veil reveals itself to be less fickle and to obey distinct principles. Its loops and fissures occur regularly, if only over long stretches of time. Freakish conditions repeat themselves, but never is there anything like a consistency in modesty. There is no evolution in corporeal modesty; instead we view an unending repetition of established patterns.

Any forecast to predict the trend of modesty for so much as half a generation might prove utterly wrong. But there is never any lack of speculation and many writers have expressed eagerness to penetrate the puzzle of the future. Anatole France confessed his curiosity with regard to posterity very candidly. "If I were allowed to choose from the pile of books which will be published one hundred years after my death, do you know which one I would take? No, by no means would I select a novel from that future library—I would simply take a fashion magazine so that I could see how women dress one century

*Every excursion into the future is handicapped  
by current notions of corporeal modesty.*

*Huntress, 1930. Drawing by Bakst, dated 1921.*



after my departure. And these rags would tell me more about the humanity of the future than all the philosophers, novelists, prophets and scholars."

Would they really? Does a man tightly clad in stiff drab cloth, unmarred by even the suspicion of a cheerful color or ornament, allow us to conclude that he represents a model of civic virtue? Or does his appearance rather betray a sinister character? Are the eye-flaps of a nun a guaranty of holiness? And what about grandfather who gratefully cherished the accident that disclosed to his exulting eyes a delicate female foot or—delightful circumstance—even a slender ankle? What would have been his first thought had clairvoyance revealed to him that his granddaughter would enjoy men's admiration centered around her bare stomach-pit and her well-formed navel, a situation brought along by wearing a two-piece bathing suit? Would he, in response to such foreknowledge, have shot dead his own offspring to prevent the shame? Grandfather with his grandfather's sense of honor probably may have seen no other choice. It is left to conjecture what the court's verdict would have been in disposing of the case. The judge would probably have rejected the culprit's vision of doom, because his own imagination might have been too chaste to admit that such fashionable debauchery would come true in his own life-time. Was there any choice for him but to ascribe grandfather's heroic behaviour to insanity?

Students of psychology will find evidence even among Anglo-Saxon writers that we are heading toward clothing conditions which, if earnestly discussed today, would send every righteous citizen into a moral spasm. With the shrinking of decoration towards its more primitive and stronger forms of amulets and charms and towards unrestricted painting, and with the protective nature of dress becoming gradually less important, clothing will ultimately become again something of an esoteric cloud and, if not actually the horny skin, at least a healthy tan. To those sensitive souls who scent the brewing of ungodliness and chaos, a historic-geographic panorama of modesty may help to revive their belief in the permanency of social institutions and strengthen their desire for survival.

Our bodies have only recently come to light, after a thousand-year hiding. Their discovery has taken us by surprise, and the majority of us still regards them with suspicion. Much time will elapse before we make peace with our corporeality and acquire a new and sound conscience. To be sure, although the human body has led a secret existence in every-day life, it has always been much in evidence in art. However, the portrayed nude must have seemed hardly more real than the angels' wings or the tail of mermaids. Prejudice probably originated the popular belief that the naked or scantily clothed savage is but an intermediary link between animal and man. The literature of the discoveries of the last centuries is full of that condescending attitude towards the non-civilized, i.e. the unclothed.

White Man's behaviour towards his own body is equally unreasonable. If we could fathom the complexity of his dissatisfaction with his body, much light



would be shed on the problem of clothing. Unfortunately, we do not have a straight, unbiased view on our corporeal selves. For various reasons, historical and emotional, our body proper is believed to be incomplete—a body minus clothes. It is the external shell, the tailor-made surface that prompts us, generally, to think of our real self. This disguise is the normal, the visible. In daily life we encounter only the packaged body, while the human substance is sternly and purposely kept secret. The dismissal of an unsatisfactory body through hiding has not improved our physique, but aversion for the flesh has produced the ingenious trappings which we lovingly call our clothes. The moment apparel was added—it matters little whether this is the bead-string of the primitive or the mummy-like enclosure of the civilized—the natural harmony of the body became unbalanced. The reciprocal interdependence of body and clothes has continuously furnished new conflicts, the reconciliation of which constitutes the peculiar esthetics of dress.

Primitive man as well as the untamed child of civilized man lack entirely that feeling of inferiority with regard to their naked body which is the *sine qua non* of modesty. Primitive peoples sometimes show a complete reversal in their estimate of the unclothed body. There are instances of tribes among whom only the harlots are clothed.<sup>4</sup> The child in civilized society learns that clothes are indispensable by way of admonitions and prohibitions. It is altogether doubtful whether such child thus attains a genuine state of modesty. That high achievement, it would seem, requires the blessed constitution of a potential saint. At most, an infant can be taught the feeling of bashfulness.

The intensity of the sense of shame varies not only historically but regionally. The shriveling of earthly distances, through the perfection of means of transportation and communication, brings within easy reach localities which formerly were safely isolated. Only a few years ago, many peoples used to bathe in public without the aid of clothing. This custom, we are learning, is rapidly disappearing due to the protests of foreign travelers. The sectarian system of puritanism, so singularly propitious to moral missions and uninhibited by the lack of any desire to understand foreign folkways, irreverently attacks age-old institutions which do not reflect its own customs.

At first thought, modesty appears to be a virtue as absolute and indivisible as, say, honesty. Inquiry reveals, however, that modesty shows a multitude of forms which depend on such divergent factors as age, habit, custom, law, epoch, climate, time of day and others. Each factor imparts additional significance which challenges a different interpretation; many are contradictory or variable. Furthermore, modesty and immodesty are not always clearly recognizable. Their borders are blurred, and confusion besets premises and conclusions alike. Every effort at a total evaluation of the numerous patterns of modesty must fail because of lack of a basis for comparison. Examples of modesty taken from different geographical or historical latitudes cannot be separated from their context without becoming meaningless. Any appraisal of modesty coming from a society with a traditional fear of the human body





*The sixteenth century Flemish mourning costume which almost obliterates the human silhouette illustrates an extreme case of modesty. In our time a similar attire is worn by middle class women on one of the Azores islands. This costume, called capote e capello, (opposite page), actually can be traced to the Flamands, the first settlers of the Azores.*

*From Recueil de la diversité des habits, 1562.*

*Woman from Granada.*

*From Vecellio, De gli habiti antichi etc., 1590.*





*Bohemian woman.*  
*From Vecellio, De gli habiti antichi etc., 1590.*



and an avowed shame for its most natural functions, cannot but furnish a distorted picture. Though it may not amount to much more than a symbolical-philological promenade, for the sake of argument it is worthwhile to investigate the physique of man and woman in order to disclose, limb for limb, organ for organ, their supposed allergy to shame.

The Mohammedan woman when scantily dressed and surprised by strangers, covers her face instead of her body; she is a laughing matter to us. Nevertheless, her reaction is quite consistent with our custom of masking our faces in carnival time when licentiousness is let loose under the protection of anonymity. The veiling of Moslem women, when in public, is the exaltation of that desire for hiding the individual, though there is no gaiety extant. Tradition seems to be forceful enough to ensure the permanence of the veil. It should be remembered that in Turkey the abolition of veil and turban was only achieved with recourse to severe punishment.<sup>5</sup>

A recent dispatch from Beyruth reports that Syrian rioters, hurling stones and firing pistols, forced their way into a theatre and a French officers' club in Damascus, in protest against the attendance of unveiled women.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in 1830, when a masked ball was held in one of New York's theatres, the guests were stoned by the mob. "On seeking protection from the constables, the managers were told they were law-breakers, and could have no protection."<sup>7</sup> As would befit the Occident, the wrath of the populace was caused by the *hiding* of faces. Sumner relates the case of Catholic nuns who, having always hidden their faces from each other, and being unveiled forcibly, felt all the shame of indecent exposure.<sup>8</sup>







*Left: The sixteenth century Turkish middle class woman, complete with muzzle, exemplifies the high standard of sartorial modesty of her country.*

*From Vecellio, De gli habiti antichi etc., 1590.*

*Above: American fashion illustration, 1859.*

*Opposite page: Occident and Orient differ in their conceptions of modesty.*

*Cartoon from Le Rire.*





There are instances where the covering of the face is enforced independent of religious influence. In archaic Greece, masks and veils served to assure the anonymity of the *hetaerae*.<sup>9</sup> Among the Tuareg, it is the man who hides his face, while the woman leaves it uncovered.<sup>10</sup> A grotesque example of modesty is ascribed to Armenians in a travel book of the seventeenth century. Conjugal relations, as they were then, demanded of the housewife not to remove her veil until she had put her husband to bed and had extinguished all lights; she also had to get up before day-break. The author traveler assures us that though a couple might have been married for ten years, the man may never have seen the face of his spouse. Neither might he have heard her voice, he adds, since, though he was used to address her, it was only proper for her to respond by a movement of her head.<sup>11</sup>

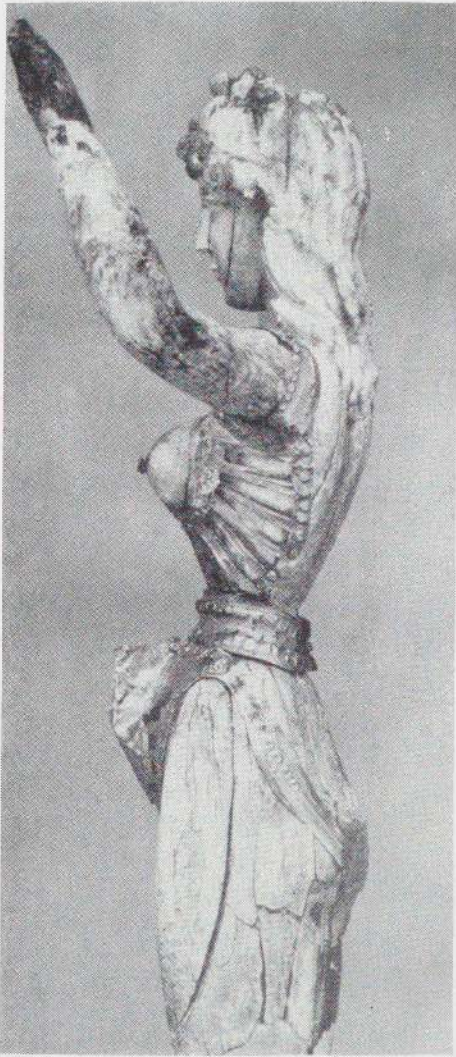
The Arab woman bares her bosom without embarrassment, but she believes the sight of the back of her head to be still more indecent than the exposure of her face. In early Palestine, women were obliged to keep their heads covered; for a woman, to be surprised outside the house without a head-covering was a sufficient reason for divorce.<sup>12</sup> Until the past century, married orthodox Jewesses were not allowed to display their hair. They wore wigs, instead, that fitted so tightly that not one lock of hair could be seen.<sup>13</sup> To this day, the Catholic Church insists on women's wearing hats when entering a place of worship.

Civic and ecclesiastical laws stipulate the requirements of modesty. These are necessarily concerned with the genitals ever since sex has been identified with sin. Greek civilization, a curricular subject to us, did not share such interpretation. Though antiquity's worldly wisdom and ethical principles are respected, its hedonistic character is diametrically opposed to modern thought. To fit the nudity of classic Greece into our moral order, it was conveniently shoved off into the realm of art. This arrangement proved entirely workable, as art in our time is securely divorced from life. Odious and offensive as the human body is judged by earthly statutes, it is sanctioned in art. Fossilized in stone and pigment, its emotional power is believed to have been reduced to that of a pudding, though eternal precaution added as an after-thought the traditional fig-leaf. A conciliatory note rings in the story which tells that in the vastest array of human imagery, the Vatican's collection of antique sculpture, the defamation of the male anatomy was softened by putting the fig-leaves on hinges.

McMaster relates in his history of the people of the United States that, when Hiram Power's "Chanting Cherubs" were shown in Boston, the exhibitors felt obliged to drape their loins with linen. He adds sarcastically: "A like treatment was accorded to an orang-outang which visited the city about the same time."<sup>14</sup>

Clothes, often so inefficient as a protection against Nature's rigors, and unsatisfactory as an ornament, are however true instruments of a moral philosophy. In one or two instances, the implements of clothing are veritable





*Today, we have at least partially overcome Victorian concepts of modesty. However, we do not look at the human body as a whole but distinguish between nice and nasty parts. Antique civilizations were largely unconcerned with such discriminations.*

*At right: Maiden, archaic Greek sculpture.  
Acropolis Museum, Athens.*

*Above: Ivory figure of Minoan goddess, found in Crete.  
From Evans, The Palace of Minos at Knossos.*

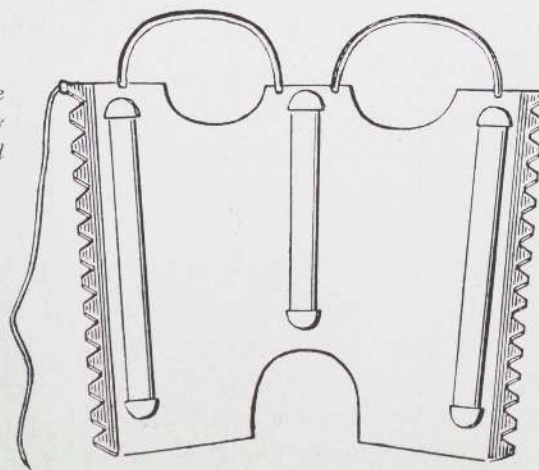


resurrections of Adam's cuirass, as in the corset of a generation ago. That the wearing of a corset was then mainly a woman's privilege or, rather, duty, matters little in view of the perfect preservation of the moral implications. This corset which first was used as a remedy for supposed shapelessness, later became a focus of erotic attraction, wound up by being an indispensable requisite of decency. The uncorseted woman reeked of license. But this cuirass was collapsible, and so were morals.

That the revival of adamitic innocence by way of encasing the human body in armor was not the idea of a fashionable and degenerate society alone, but was perpetrated by what we should not hesitate to call healthy peoples, is evidenced by examples from folk-lore. Among Circassians there was the custom of providing the girls between the tenth and twelfth year with broad girdles made of untanned leather. The wealthy fastened them with silver hooks, but among the common people these contraptions were tightly sewn around the waist. One witness, familiar with the customs of the Circassians, tells us that they "fastened their girls into saffian leather garments for seven years to give their figures symmetry."<sup>15</sup> Another observer adds that this leather cuirass was worn by the girls until their wedding-night "when the bride-groom, with a sharp-cutting dagger, unties the Gordian knot, which ceremony is frequently attended with danger."<sup>16</sup>

*This constricting corselet, used among the Ossetes (Central Caucasus), was put on by girls between seven and eight years of age, and not removed until marriage.*

*From Ploss, Woman.*



The female breasts, objects *par excellence* for the facetious adventures in modesty, are much in evidence today, though only in veiled form. "The importance of the breast in the movies" remarks a writer of today, "can be exaggerated only by the movies, but those same set up the rules whereby 'breast' is a taboo word, and sweaters cannot be tight."<sup>17</sup> Among darker races a great many have preserved enough respect and interest in that foremost feminine ornament to allow its liberal display. But the combined efforts of white missionaries and underwear manufacturers have in many instances





*This charming advertisement permits us a fine insight into the indolent minds of our grandmothers. In a world of commerce, where health is a promise attached to commodities sold over the counter, the physician is likely to cut a ludicrous figure.*

*From Harper's Bazar, 1886.*



#### THE BARE-NECK EVIL.

INSUFFICIENT clothing about the necks and throats of women is causing an increase in goiter, we are told by Sir James Cantlie, a London surgeon, writing in *The Daily Mail* (London). Some time ago, says Sir James, a famous surgeon, in dealing with women's dress, divided the zones of temperature in evening dress, from above downward, into arctic, temperate, and tropic. What was true of evening dress is now true of out-of-door dress, and even more so, for the chest and back are exposed to so great an extent that even decency is defied in many instances. He goes on:

"The effect of this upon the health of our young women (tho this mode of dress is unfortunately not confined to them, for older women follow the evil example) and the possible detriments to health are daily upon our lips, altho no one has set out in definite terms what these effects are.

"Passing over several of the consequences, such as the bursts of high temperature to which the underclothed are liable, be they men or women, and other equally prominent symptoms, I would draw attention to a condition which all must have noticed—the 'puffy necks' which affect so many of our young women to-day.

"Of five hundred women on whom I made observations, with the help of those present at my lectures, no fewer than sixty-seven had their necks so 'puffy' that they were noticeable. The puffiness is due to enlargement of, or in the neighborhood of, the thyroid gland.

"A slight fulness in this region has from early Grecian times been looked upon by artists with a certain amount of favor; but an exaggeration is utterly condemned, associated as it is with face pallor, puffy features, anemia, and listlessness. Briefly, the condition is termed goiter, altho true goiter has its specific cause.

"True goiter is known in certain parts of the country, . . . but it is not, and never has been, a disease attributed to living in London. Yet to-day in a certain form it is plentiful; it has mostly made its appearance since bare necks and chests came into fashion; and as the years of this fashion increase so do the puffy and goiter-looking necks. . . .

"The Parisian designers who determine the nature of women's dress have set an evil fashion, unhygienic to a degree; but no railings of mothers, physiologists, or right-minded folk are capable of preventing the damage the Parisian manikin has done and is doing to the young women of Europe."

*Contrary to what should be expected from the expensive guardians of our health, they never fought a successful battle for hygienic and comfortable dress; this might have injured their moral standing and earning capacity.*

*From Literary Digest, 1920.*

succeeded in eradicating the native lack of prejudice; occasionally they also extinguished the converts altogether. Indeed, the Mother Hubbard shirt promoted often, besides holiness, civilized diseases.

Less barbarious but not yet elevated enough to nurse their infants with synthetic mother milk from glass bottles are the non-industrialized peoples. There are still a great many countries where the sight of the respectable utilitarian organs which the French call *les réservoirs de la maternité* are as common as the suckling child. The fertile maternal breast is a subject admissible in Christian art. The same Church which objected to even the suspicion of a foot in religious representation—Murillo was reprimanded by the inquisition for having painted the madonna with toes—allowed the Mother of God to be pictured with a bare bosom.<sup>18</sup>

The pattern of conduct and the mutual consent is almost reversed if the subject in question is the virginal or non-functional breast. Let us first be reminded that Cretan or Spartan young women were quite uninhibited in that matter and dressed to emphasize their fine physique. The remoteness of these peoples assures them our forgiveness. However, similar fashions in eighteenth century France cannot but provoke our indignation. Social upheavals caused by economic crisis or war have been blamed as decisive factors in loosening the decorum of a nation. Still, we find the same liberties in such dissimilar epochs as the reign of Louis the Fourteenth and the Directoire. "Women wore such low-cut dresses that the slightest movement showed the tips of their breasts above their bodices. Soon the more daring ones became accustomed to leaving them always there."<sup>19</sup> The following century eclipsed the female breast by providing a multitude of other anatomical diversions to the effect that around 1900 a sweeping and homogenous front bulge had found enthusiastic acceptance, a highly artificial protuberance which we may tentatively call the monobosom. At the same time, a specialized industry made it feasible to mold the actual or illusory substance into endless variations of every imaginable shape. Quite logically, this had to end in the total negation of the bosom. Its nonexistence was shortly decreed, and God knows what ever-flowing source of shame must then have been the normally developed upper part of a woman.

Actually, we are able to ascribe the changes in modesty to the machinations of the interested businessman. Since long he has been the omnipotent fashioner of conditions important to life; now he emerges as a moral factor. With success in business becoming quickly identified with the highest civic virtue, the purity of the businessman's dealings is taken for granted. The vast field of erotic manifestations is incorporated in his speculative interests and is exploited to any length. He proves that even obscenity can be commercialized.

Modesty, whose commandments had heretofore been observed by following unwritten rules, got codified for the benefit of the manufacturer. The retail trade in the theatre arts as performed by the stock company left always a



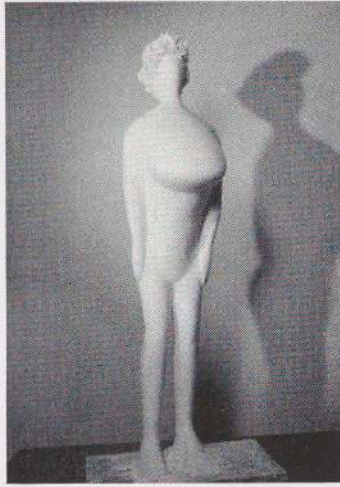


*It is not surprising that bottle-feeding nations have de-  
famed the female breasts as indecent objects. It is equally  
fitting that the sight of breasts has to be paid for, and  
that the adequate place for such esthetic pleasure should  
be burlesque theatres only.*

*Virgin and child, by Jean Fouquet.*

sufficient margin for the interpretation of decency. The classics were clipped according to time and place of the performance, and modesty was taken care of by complying with the sentiments of the audience. The very different sort of over-all appeal and fool-proofness of the moving picture made it imperative to gauge the depth of popular feelings for modesty, to establish a rigid pattern offensive to none and, thereby, assure the unlimited sale of the commercial product. This monopoly on modesty created an institution second only to the dogma of infallibility itself. Here, a modern legislation on sumptuary laws was to rival with Moses' moral code. Whereas the violation of his commandments was punishable with nothing more substantial than hell-fire, circumstantial proof and peculiarities of which nobody had ever taken the trouble to establish sufficiently, the dealer in cinematic illusions was prepared to pay for any false step in real currency. Among the commandments of industrial modesty is one that deals with "the more intimate parts of the human body" among which were rightly recognized the breasts of





*The mono-bosom. (Compare with illustration on page 49.)*

woman. "They should not be clearly and unmistakably outlined by the garment," decreed the legislators.<sup>20</sup> Mindful of the days of the mono-bosom they decided that one single breast, though anatomically incorrect, was less frivolous than a pair.\*

The order was issued after the first World War, a time which also saw a considerable boost of women's rights. The new liberty brought about not only an invasion into men's domain but also a short excursion into the rather dubious province of transvestitism. Women tried to acquire a male chest; they borrowed men's hairdos and assumed a mannish walk. With all this impersonation of a male adolescent, how did they compensate for the missing female characteristics? By what stratagem did they accumulate sufficient erotic quality, or its modern equivalent—immodesty?

The event which, so to say, insured the continuity of human propagation was the unveiling of the female leg. An incident, formerly witnessed in places of ill repute only, or occasionally imagined in the more prurient dreams of grandfather, had quickly become a common place. The domestication of the female leg is the accomplishment of our time. In the glory that was Greece, soft folds overlaid the contour of limbs, but the thighs and legs were "unmistakably" there. The dusk of the middle ages of corporeal etiquette was of astonishing perseverance and for fifty generations the legs had led a twilight existence. Only outcasts, such as circus performers, actors and ballet dancers, who lived on the far outskirts of civic propriety of conduct, were regarded as bipeds, a classification tainted by the stigma of the disreputable. To be sure, the reticence of admitting female legs was an aristocratic trait. Female sovereigns—puritan Victoria had about the same notions on the subject as the more distant and voluptuous Queen of Spain—were adamant in banning the very thought of the lower extremities, and we are indebted to the libertinism of poets and artists for having preserved the concept of the leg from extinction.

It is significant that the time of liberation of female legs coincides with a profound disregard of the bosom and of the trunk in general. The persistent occupation with a specific erotic attribute, whether actually displayed or merely suggested, loses its power of attraction proportionally to the length of time and the degree of satisfaction derived. With the appeasement of curiosity, the demand for disclosure becomes sated, and its abandonment seems expedient. Today, it seems that leg cult and leg "art" have reached a saturation point. The history of dress records such periods when neck, shoulders, abdomen, haunches, and buttocks were alternately exponents of

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*\* Though the current edition of the female bosom restores the duality of the breasts, a curious anomaly creeps into the anatomy of the North American woman: The fashionable mono-buttock. Modesty decrees today a uniform posterior bulge, achieved with the help of a barrel-like contraption, called, not altogether happily, a girdle.*





Back go all eyes to the bustle, rippling-round like a palm fan. Forward goes

**FAN BUSTLE**

your mind's eye to those very special occasions when only a very special black

will do. Black rayon crepe with faille midriff and bustle. Sizes 10 to 16. **29.95**



*Every article of apparel, originally applied as a token of modesty, immediately draws attention to the part it covers. Thus, the fan, the stomacher, the cache-sex, have become to be regarded as the common requisites of flirtation. Modesty, whatever its nature, turns as easily as milk, and becomes false modesty. Above, Congo women, wearing ornamented mats, called "negbie."*

*Courtesy Asia magazine.*

*At left: The palm imitation in faille was sold in 1946. The wording of the advertisement leaves no doubt about the bustle's function to focus interest on the buttocks.*

*Courtesy Martin's, Brooklyn.*



heightened interest. There is but a limited number of convexities in human anatomy, and it became deformation's business to create new bulges on which to graft new shoots of allure.

Human ingenuity did not shrink from the idea of measuring modesty in yards and inches. Fashionable periodicals of the seventies printed charts of the perfect length of skirts for the benefit of infants as well as ladies, and the appearance on public beaches of policemen carrying rulers is still remembered. The bathing suit, that newcomer in the field of clothing, demolished in its triumphal progress what heretofore had seemed to be impregnable bulwarks of modesty. The quickness of success was assured by the realization that—within the bounds of modern civilization—the bathing outfit represented the ultimate minimum of covering, its logical reduction to the bare essentials. To all intents and purposes, it was untrammelled by functional considerations. If the purpose of bathing is to get wet, the function of the bathing suit remains obscure. It is neither intended for keeping us warm, nor is it an aid to swimming. Contrary to what may be common belief, the bathing suit is irrelevant to any activity in and under water. At best, the bathing suit is a social dress as genuine as the frock-coat.

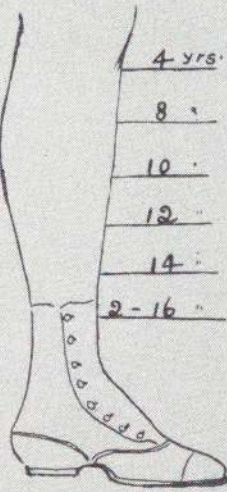
In spite of its novelty, the bathing suit has already a history and, from the point of view of modesty, an instructive one at that. In a small portion of time, all the agonizing discomfort and moral perplexities of the history of dress are unreeled in condensed form. The bathing machines, these mobile monuments to moral imbecility, went well together with an equally monstrous disguise of the body. The best suitable attire for the occasion as conceived by gentlemen were the gaily striped *tricots* as worn by animal trainers and jugglers. The clownish induements lent a note of country fair to the beach; to the bathers it probably conveyed a gladsome feeling of irresponsibility which suppressed for a while the awareness of partaking in dangerous liberties.

Female bathers who at the seaside adopted a Victorian version of a harem, minus its charms and intimacies, were all but invisible to men. Under such circumstances there was no need for seductive display; dress was purely of competitive character and no load of cloth was too cumbersome, no frills too impracticable. A foremost psychologist of our time comments: “. . . we look back . . . at the bathing machines with astonishment mingled with disgust; the latter because at this distance, we are able to perceive the erotic obsessiveness of the modesty in question. Future generations may one day contemplate with similar emotion the fact that we wear bathing dresses at all. Our principle clearly demands that we should be able to tolerate nakedness where it is obviously called for, as on the bathing beach.”<sup>21</sup>

When the charm of the hide-and-seek play had worn off, and sea-bathing had evolved from its purported ablutions to its true exhibitionistic character, the disintegration of attire and modesty was unavoidable. The freedom of beach dress—if the vestigial patches of cloth deserve being called dress—is re-



weight of a dress for growing girls should be suspended from the shoulders. Where for any reason the frock must be made in waist and skirt portions, the latter should be made on an under-waist.



The proper length for little girls' skirts at various ages.

Modesty was something very tangible, even measurable to our grandmothers. The chart for the proper length for little girls' skirts is of remarkable accuracy. It demonstrates the tantalizing eclipse of the female leg, climaxed by its black-out at puberty.

From Harper's Bazar, 1868.



Regional costumes, unaffected by commercial dress fashions, have their own laws of modesty.

From Visk, Hungarian Dances.





*The women of the past century who wore trains for the beach, had as little doubt about the infallibility of fashion editors as have today their granddaughters. Though present-day beach wear is healthier, to less hypocritical nations it appears just as foolish.*

*The idea that white men have to wear a special suit while bathing, reflects his dubious ethics. Hundred years ago, Thoreau, having mused at boys bathing in a river, entered in his journal this pertinent observation: "What a singular fact for an angel visitant to this earth to carry back in his note-book, that men were forbidden to expose their bodies under the severest penalties."<sup>22</sup>*



markable because it has originated a double moral. Hitherto, the momentary version of modesty had been inflexible and indivisible, discounting the rare exception of ballroom privileges. Now, under its dual character, the nature of modesty assumed different values under the open sky and in the stuffy atmosphere of the home. An outdoor version of modesty was thus put in circulation which, surprisingly enough, was perfectly compatible with the domestic variety.

The intensive preoccupation with women's legs that started in the nineteen-twenties has not subsided at the present time. Their admission among the mentionable portions of anatomy was brought about in several steps—ankle, calf, knee, thigh—gradually adding up to the entirety. Yet curiously enough, the taboo that covered the foot was not lifted until many years later. Today,



*Photograph courtesy Life magazine.*



men and women who timidly contemplate a release of their toes from the leather coffins of shoes, face many qualms. Among the more mature people, even those willing to forget the supposed unseemliness of bare toes, are unable to conform because their feet are no longer eligible for the new privileges. Bad footwear and bad habits have indeed reduced the once beautiful foot to an impure and indecent object. By all means, let us encourage them to hide the stigmata of coarseness for the rest of their lives.

The tardy recognition of the existence of man's ten toes is a milestone of civilization. The imprisonment of the foot lasted for almost two thousand years and it can be directly ascribed to religious taboos. The idea of the impurity of feet is as old as the shame for the body; at times, the foot stood for the body, the part symbolized the whole. Our concept of the foot is indeed byzantine, figuratively speaking as well as in reality. The hieratic idea of the shoe is diametrically opposed to the Greek ideal. Unlike the sandal which, besides protecting effectively the sole, accentuates the structure of the







*These pictures, published in 1901 in a French magazine, accompanied an article called "What women will wear in 1915 or 1920." They illustrate not only the futility of predicting dress to come, but demonstrate the moral qualms which face the prophet. The illustrator was correct in assuming that legs were to become visible. However, he resorted to transparent skirts in order to appease a public to whom mere thinking of female legs was base.*

*From left to right, dresses for the beach, for skating, shopping and, above, evening wear.*

*From Contemporaine.*



foot and enhances its harmony of movement, the shoe's purpose is hiding. The Christian idea of the shoe is thus clearly manifested in Byzantine foot-coverings. To achieve near-oblivion, every respect for anatomical reality was abandoned and the shoe was built on the most rigid principle of symmetry.

One author of a book on the origin of modesty holds that the covering up of the foot was woman's invention, because man did not share her pedal prudery.<sup>23</sup> Man, however, was instrumental in upholding the taboo on woman's feet. In the China of yesterday, the disclosure of the female foot was regarded not so much as an immodesty as an obscenity. We find a similar conception in the Spain of Philip the Fifth. The clothes of Spanish women touched the floor and never even showed the suspicion of a shoe. The carriages of the day had special doors with a collapsible mechanism that could be lowered in order to hide the feet of a disembarking lady.<sup>24</sup> When the Queen suggested that female dresses be shortened so that they would raise less dust, men protested sternly to such change. They even had the impudence to maintain that they would prefer to see their wives dead rather than suffer the thought that other men could share the sight of their women's feet.\*<sup>25</sup> Indeed, this privilege seemed to have strictly been of connubial character; it represented the extreme instance of intimacy and was appropriately called *la dernière faveur*.<sup>26</sup> We have the description of an accident in which the Queen of Spain fell from a horse and was dragged along by it, as her foot had been caught in a stirrup. The scene was watched with horror by a great number of dignitaries and troops who could not give aid to the Queen without touching her foot. When, finally, one knight lost his self-control and saved the unfortunate from death, he also had enough presence of mind to seek the shelter of a monastery where he intended to await the royal pardon.<sup>27</sup>

A similar incident, recorded in that time, lacks the conciliatory ending. A nobleman, enamoured of the Queen, generously burned down his own castle in order to have an opportunity for acting the saviour: He was repaid for the loss of his magnificent home by carrying the Queen to safety. But a page who witnessed the escapade also saw that the gallant count had touched the august feet. The King, upon learning this, personally killed the transgressor with a pistol-shot.<sup>28</sup>

The sexual significance of the foot and the shoe, which spread from the Orient to the West, survives in superstition and quaint customs such as the throwing of shoes after the bride in marriage ceremonials. By what stages the human foot passed from its being regarded more beautiful than the hand to a lowly object, can only be guessed. The intuitive esteem which the antique

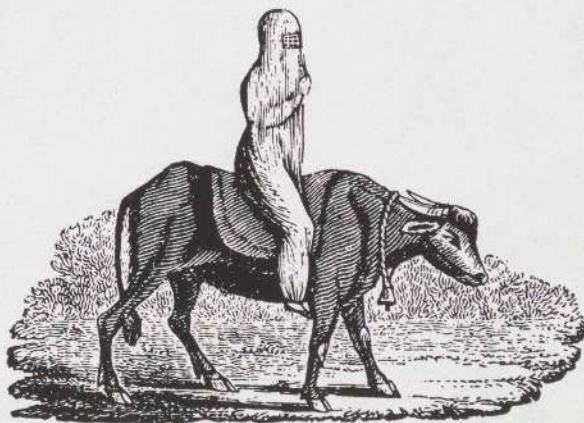
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\* Such behaviour confirms however the theory that the dominant sex makes and upholds the rules of propriety, especially those concerned with the conduct of the other sex. In general, the dominant sex raises the main objections against any change of dress; it is indifferent to its own mores but it strictly enforces the standards of modesty of the dominated sex as long as such modesty incites the instinct of courtship.<sup>29</sup>



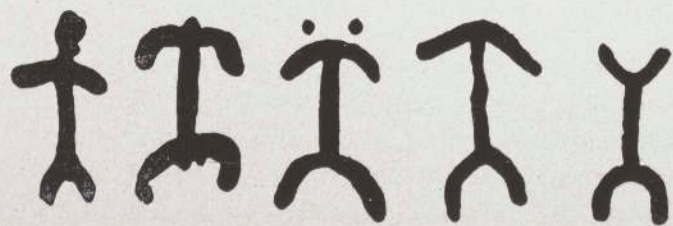
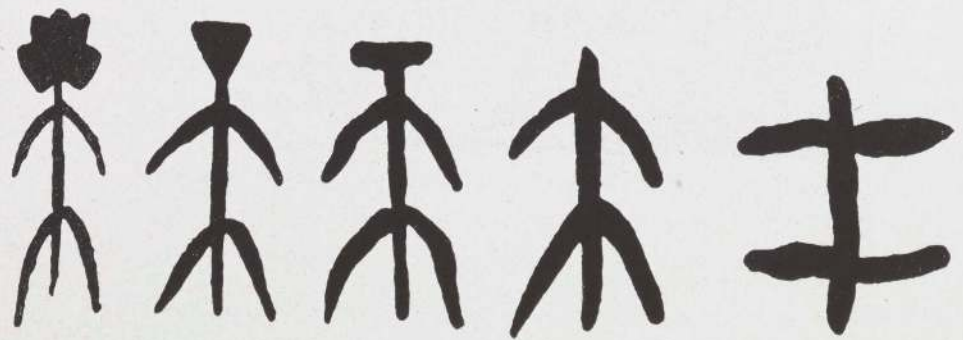
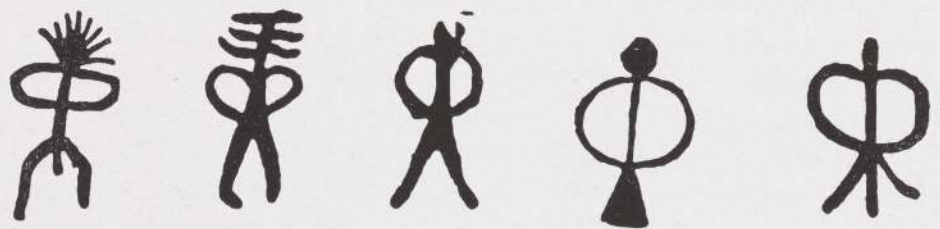
world held for the foot, gave room to the talmudic tradition with its emphasis on adequate footcoverings. Only people of the lowest social order—slaves, prisoners, penitents—went unshod. For that they were looked upon as not in God's graces. "Only he who has shoes is a man."<sup>30</sup> Bare feet also symbolized a man's incapacity for marriage, whereas removing of a woman's shoes signified her subjugation. In some instances, the uncovering of feet stood for ritual nakedness. From the confused tradition considerable vestiges have come down to posterity and are noticeable even today. The bare foot is still a symbol of poverty; it is the trade mark of a number of religious orders. And though most peasants went unshod at all times, industrial civilization is not yet willing to deem the foot a respectable member of the human body.

Dunlap Knight sums up our attitude towards the human body: "In modern civilization there has grown up an immodesty which was lacking in more ancient cultures. We are ashamed of our bodies. Whether the practice of concealing the body is the cause of our uncleanness of mind, or whether our obscenity is rather the cause of concealment, is a debated question."<sup>31</sup>





*Variations on the human figure*





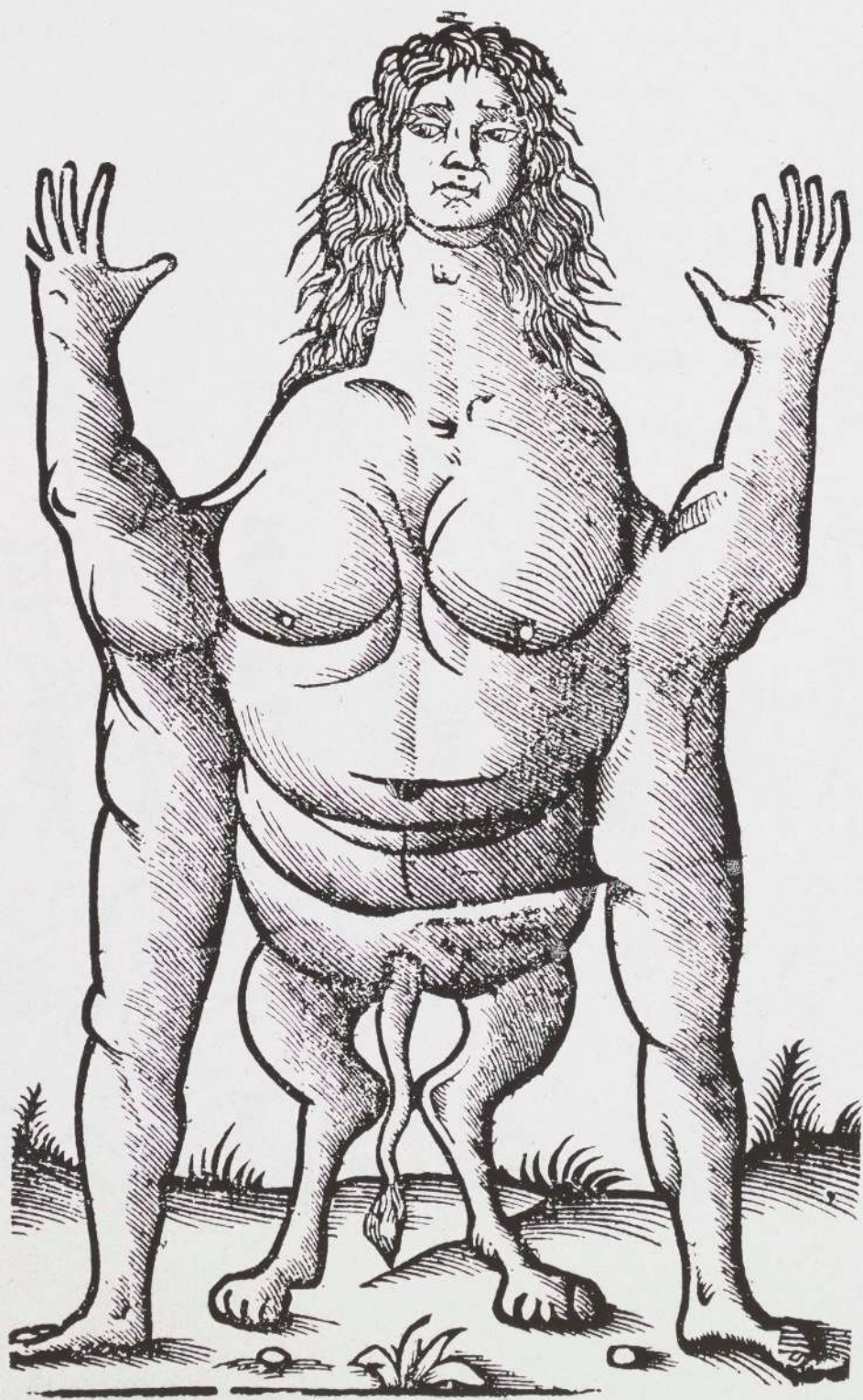


*To the rugged caveman-painter the human figure seems to have been as boring as to the sensitive modern artist. To both it served mainly as a theme for unlimited variations.*

*Prehistoric cave drawings, Spain.*

*From Breuil, Anthropologie.*









*Anatomical variations, such as human monsters, have always been a source of morbid interest. The follies of historic costume and our own readiness to adopt absurd clothing and body fashions can be traced to this fascination.*

*These two figures were not considered freaks but representatives of some peculiarly prolific races.*

*From De 'Vecchi, Aggiunta all quarta parte dell 'Indie etc., 1623.*



The twelve woodcuts, reproduced from the Liber Chronicarum, 1493, stand for that many races or nations. At that time, when information was even less reliable than it is today, people with ears long enough to serve as couch and cover were believed to be an odd but pleasant reality.

However, we must not overlook that even an enlightened century has not completely disavowed the existence of distorted human forms: To the child the monsters of fairy-tales are as real as are the wondrous deities to the pious. The juvenile and the mentally arrested seek the pleasures of the comic strip, so generously populated with enormities. We ourselves, feeling sometimes neglected by Nature, try with the help of clothes to look like real monsters.



Illustration from Grimm's fairy-tale "One-eye, two-eyes, three-eyes." Drawing by Scharl.

Courtesy Pantheon Books, Inc.





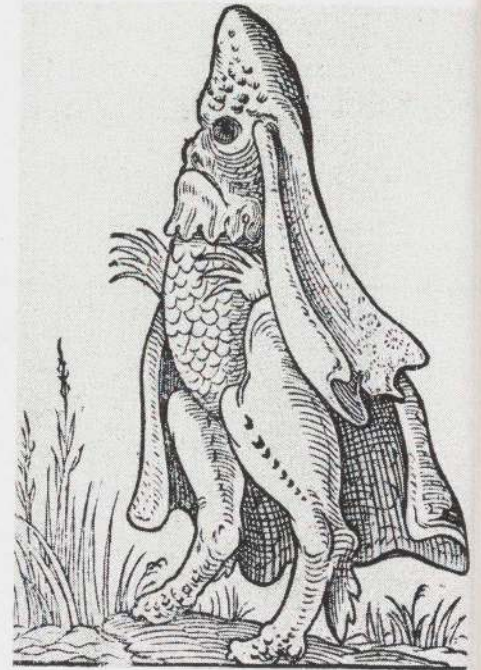
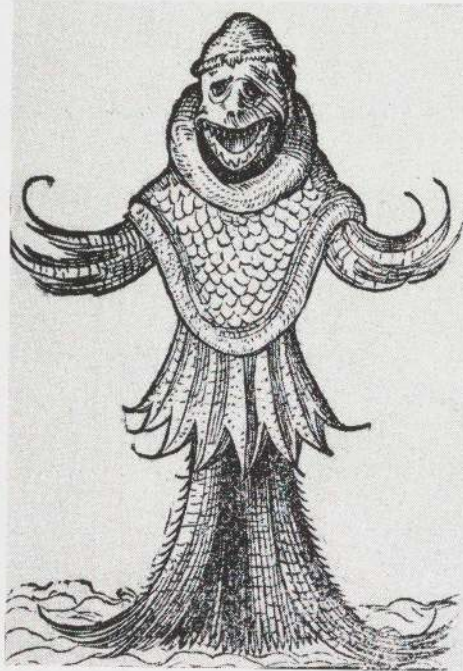
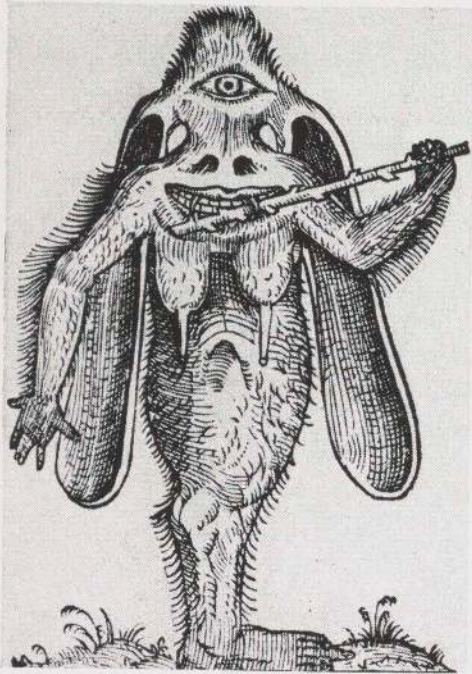
*Durga. From Moor's Hindu Pantheon.*



*Sometimes, ethnology rehabilitates the geographers of old. Women with platform lips. From Deniker, Les races et les peuples.*







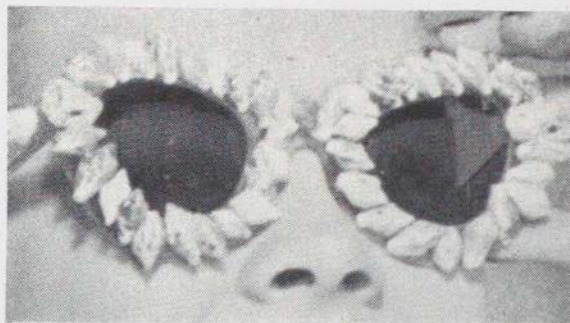
*The twelve monstrosities on the preceding pages were taken from a chronicle; but the three above come from a costume book where they kept company with such unexciting creatures as Swiss peasants and Dutch merchants.*

*Cyclop, sea-monk and sea-bishop from Recueil de la diversité des habits, 1562.*





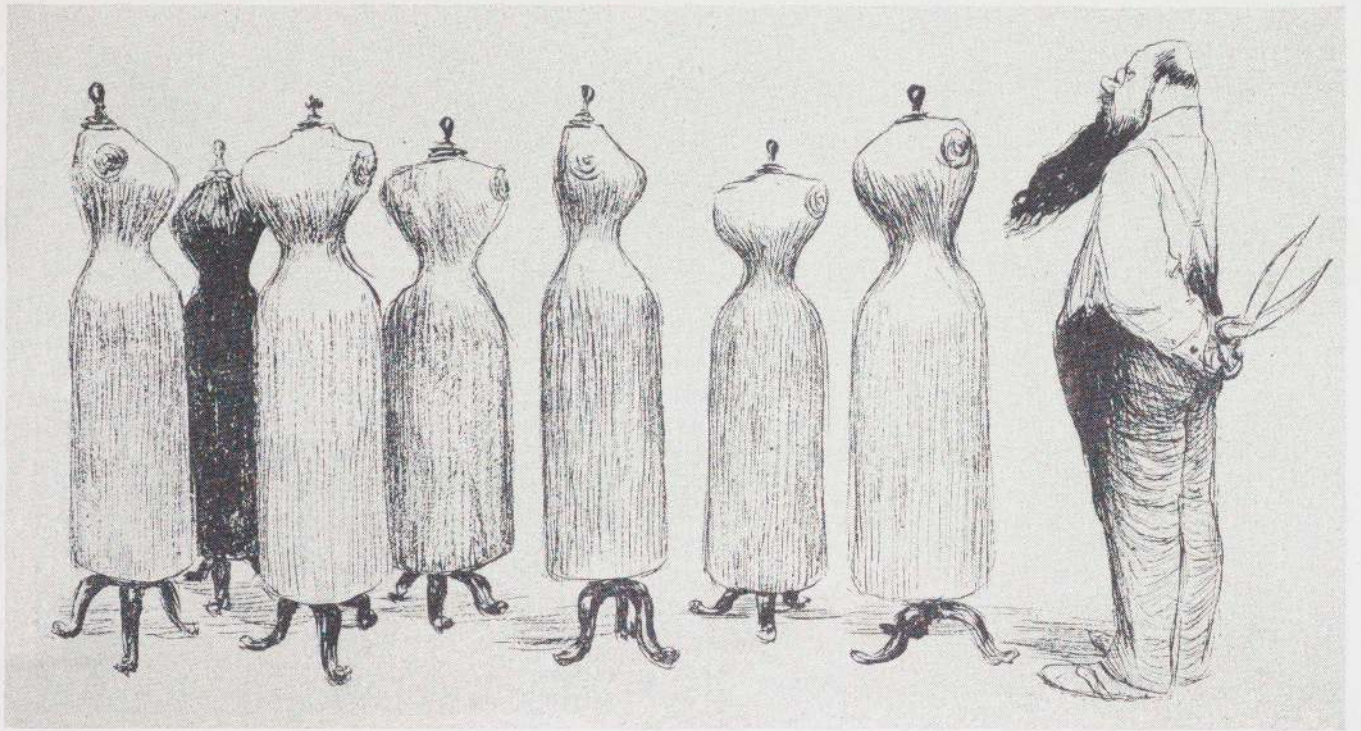
*Eye-glasses, 1946. Courtesy Clairmont & Nichols Co.*



*These first women of the automobile era, who, in their rubber masks and owlish goggles, were doubtlessly regarded as very attractive by their male escorts, have a monstrous quality from our point of view.*

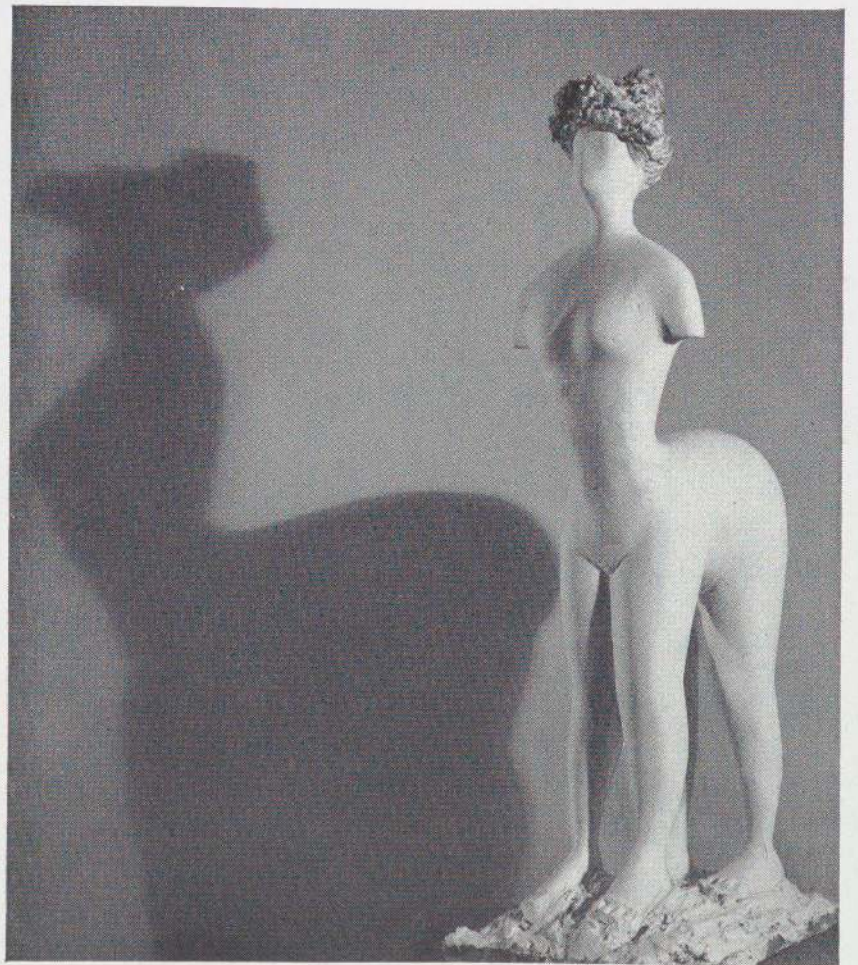
*From Illustration, 1903.*





*Bluebeard. From Le Rire, 1897.*

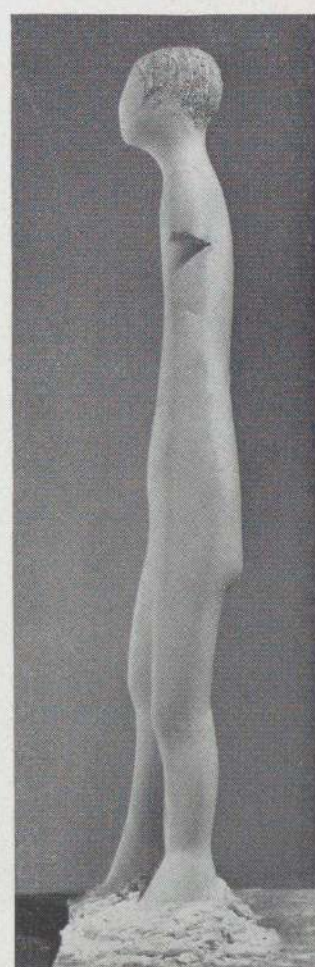
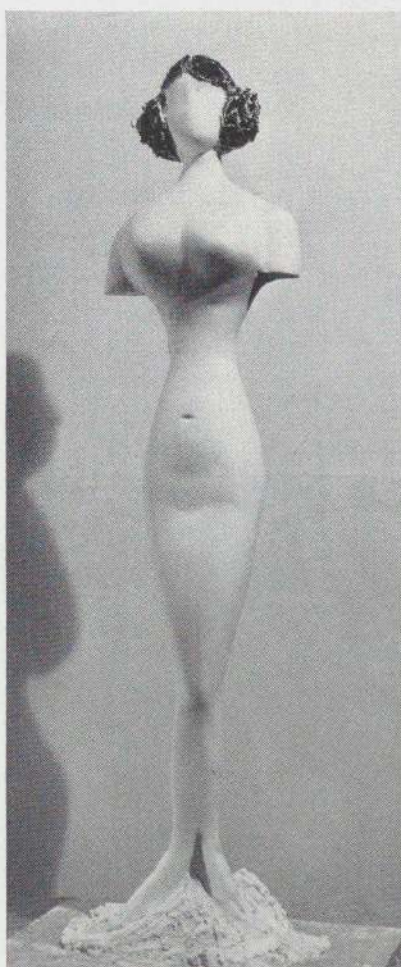
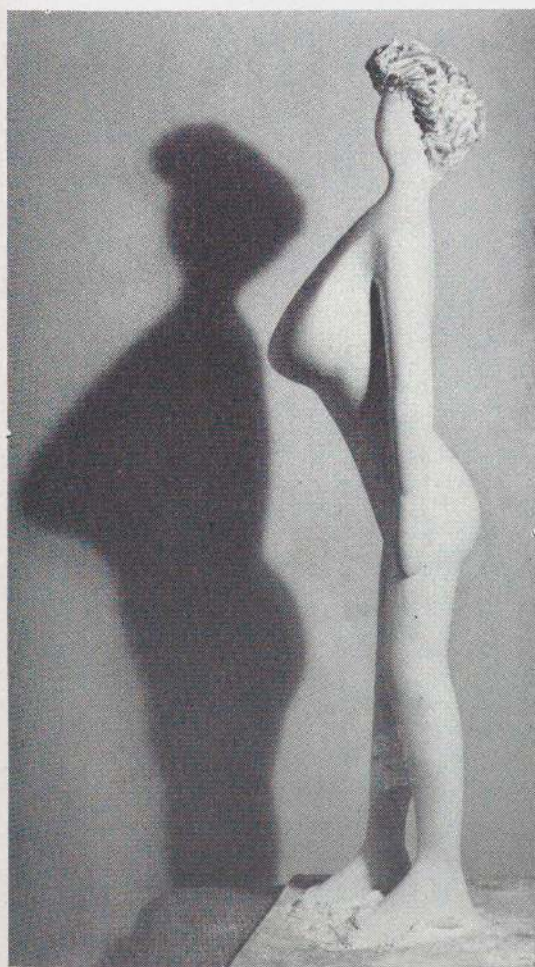
Sunami, Museum of Modern Art





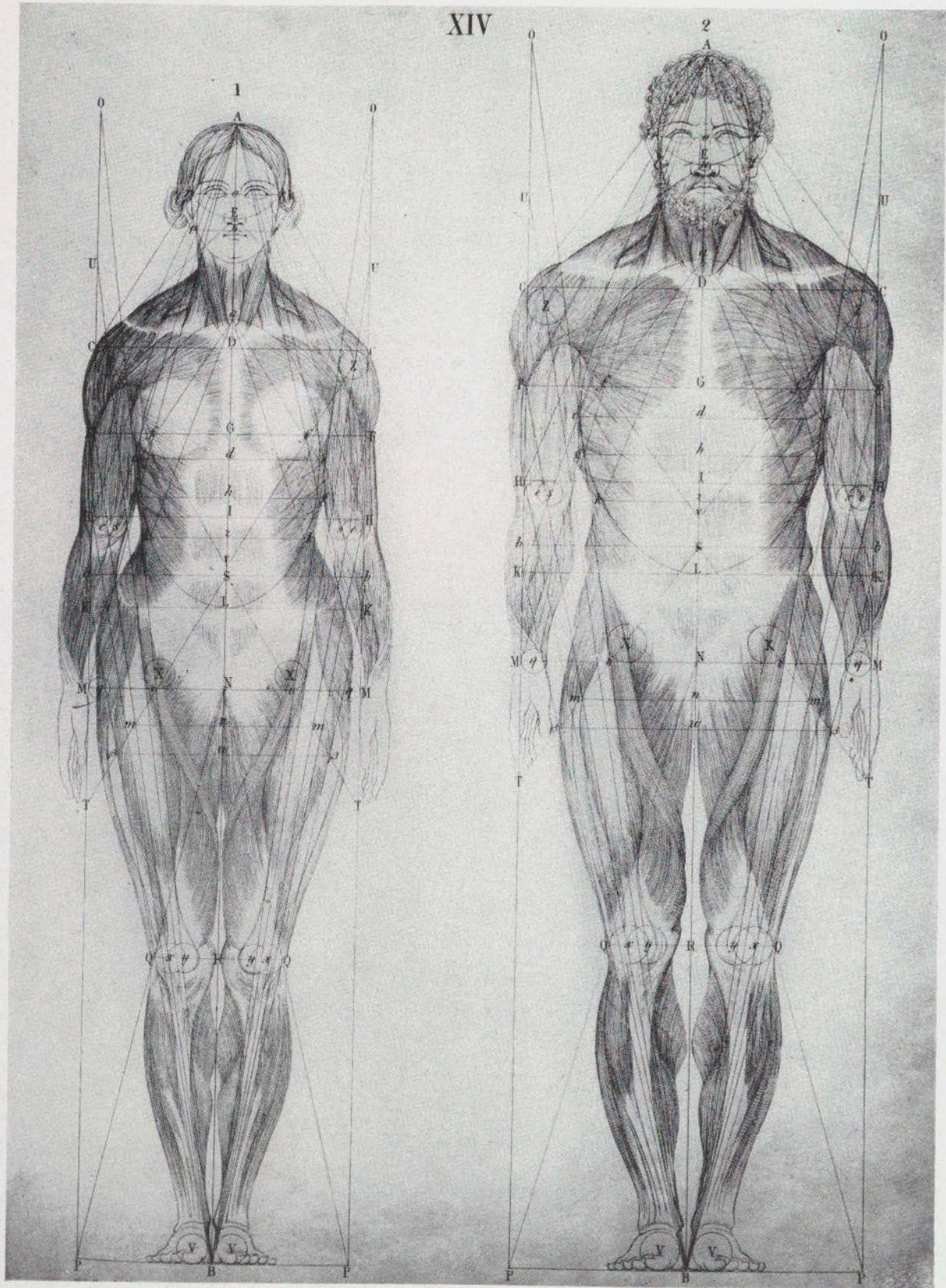
*Our civilization keeps alive the fascination for monsters and, at the same time expresses disdain for the normally built human body. The female figure is redesigned from time to time, like furniture or automobile bodies. The specimen of past days fascinate us with their zoological garden variety rather than with their erotic charm.*

*The four plaster figures, designed by the author and modeled by Costantino Nivola, show a woman's body as it would have appeared had it fitted the clothes of four fashion periods: A woman of 1875 whose figure literally conforms to her bustle. The dowager type with the shelf-like overhanging mono-bosom of 1904 (compare with illustration on page 30). The vase-like figure of 1913 which seemed to have one single leg under the hobble skirt. The concave flapper form of the twenties.*





From Hay, The Geometric Beauty of the Human Figure.





## *The unfashionable human body*

The urge to alter his body is a distinction of man only. Animals, enjoying the advantage of sounder instincts, do not feel the need of improvement through mechanical experiment. The molding and decorating of the human body persists in its primitive forms since remotest time; the technique of tattooing, body painting, deformation and mutilation which we civilized people also use today, have remained almost unchanged. Only intensity and scope of the practice is different from that of the primitives. Whereas their body art can always be traced to racial, religious or ceremonial motives, our intents today are without such purpose. The lack of meaning is reflected in the quickly varying intensity of decoration and deformation, in its dependence upon the fashions of the day.

The Greeks respected the inviolability of the human body—or almost; they did not tolerate the growth of pubic hair. Hellenistic civilization, although separated abysmally from ours, has a strong grip on our imagination. (Parenthetically, the picture of ancient Greece which we have created with educational ends in mind is a school-teacher's phantasy—sickroom flowers with the smell of disinfectant.) To the present-day guardian of moral values these elegant tunic-wearers seem to have been a most irresponsible lot. They lacked any feeling of guilt for their bodies and, instead, showed an affirmative attitude which we should call wicked. Their acceptance of the bodily structure not only as good and definite but also as a common gauge for esthetic appraisal can only be ascribed to their peculiar morals and disrespectful relationship towards their gods. Pagan, we call such wantonness, and pagan we consider today the appreciation of the undeformed human body.

The recognition of Greek art—or rather its latest and least vigorous period—as a widely accepted beauty standard in modern times is not incompatible with puritanism. The architectural shell of a banking institute or a railway station styled naively in an archaic pastiche is satisfactory to us, not in spite

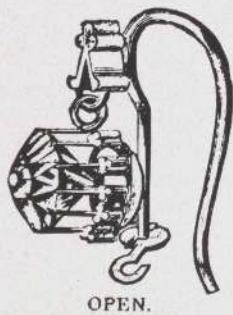


but because of its complete spiritual emptiness. Similarly, the plastic presentation of a perfect specimen of human physique, volunteering to act as Caryatide for the heavy beams of a false portico, is hardly intended for our sensual pleasure. To us, the depicted human being, hermetically sealed in its sculptured nudity, is nothing but a freak. Perhaps, it is the erotic numbness which emanates from a perfectly proportioned body that induced generations of city fathers to consider these statues as innocuous. Their reactions might have differed if the sculptor should have felt like improving the classic formality by adding a wasp-waist or sprouting buttocks.

Body art found astonishingly little interest among artists and art historians—least of all among the students of dress. Only anthropologists have recorded its aspects, and lately some psychologists have investigated that art. These are exceptions, however. The unparalleled interest, which at the beginning of the century turned towards the primitive in all its manifestations, and which resulted in a new and more intelligent comprehension of the creative act of the artist, stopped short of the art performed on the body itself. This omission is rather curious since the ornamentation and the manipulation of man's body was probably the first activity comparable to art. Both painting and sculpture seem to have originated this way; man himself was the clay for his recreated image and, simultaneously, he was the surface for ornamentation. This accounted for a most harmonious art work, because painting and sculpturing were not two separated and exclusive fields.

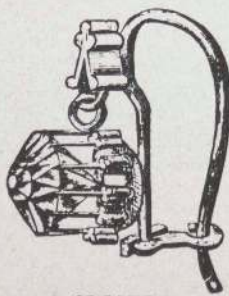
The refined individual has developed an appetite for the culture of primitive man. Modern art is unthinkable without the example of African and Oceanic sculpture, the knowledge of unconscious and subconscious forces, the imagery of the infantile, deranged and insane. The preoccupation with such divers subjects, which formerly were considered alien to art and artists, brought about a total reorientation of our esthetic concepts. The incipient interest in the exotic and grotesque—an interest that to a small extent had been latent also in other epochs—led to a frank admiration of the forces inherent in barbaric and—*ugly* art. Our time is not much concerned with the beautiful; the philosophy of beauty that formerly occupied so many minds is on the decline. Today, beauty is purely incidental. In modern art, the borders of the beautiful and unbeautiful are blurred. We are discovering beauty in ugliness, and triteness in beauty. The very laws of harmony which we extracted from our anatomical self and which are known by the common denominator of the Golden Rule—these laws have fallen in disrepute. This fact, that pictorial arts and architecture dispense with time-honored rules, does not reflect on their validity.

Inclusion of what hitherto had been disdained in art appreciation, for supposed lack of esthetic values, was indeed new. The imposing but empty structure of taste by which creative art had been comfortably judged for centuries, broke down under the shock of the discovery that art could include ugliness. We have to bear in mind that this turnabout, the consequence of which we cannot yet quite predict, also extends to the art of dress and, in all probability, will influence the future of clothing. To give but one example: The resolute



OPEN.

*Ear-rings.  
Nineteenth century.*



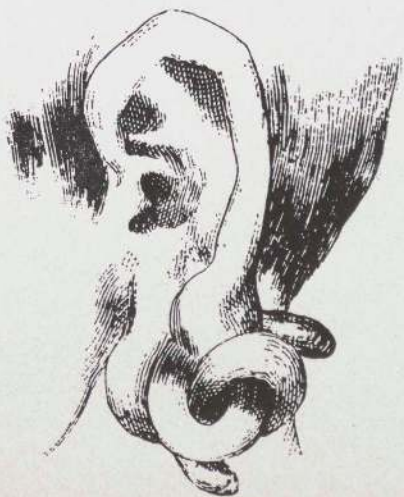
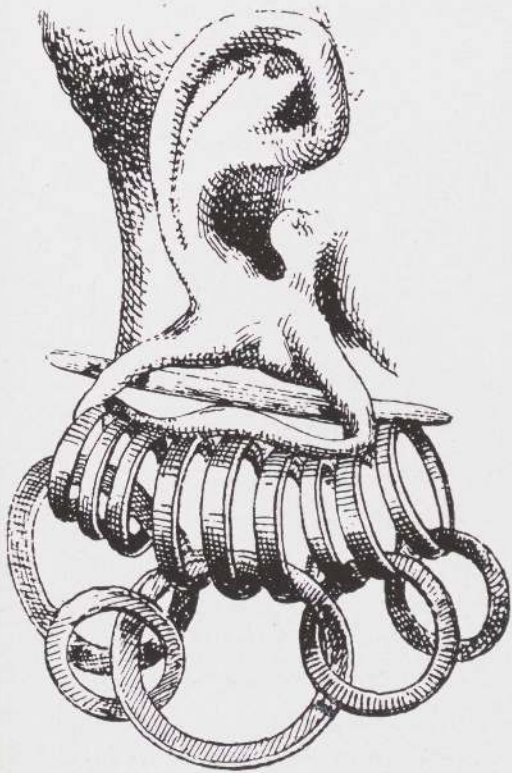
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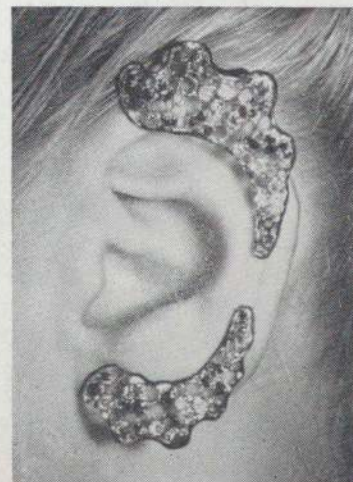
*At right: Dajak (Borneo) girl with heavy ear-rings. From Atlantis, 1936.*

*Below: Ear ornaments of natives from Santa Cruz.*

*From Cocheris, Les parures primitives.*



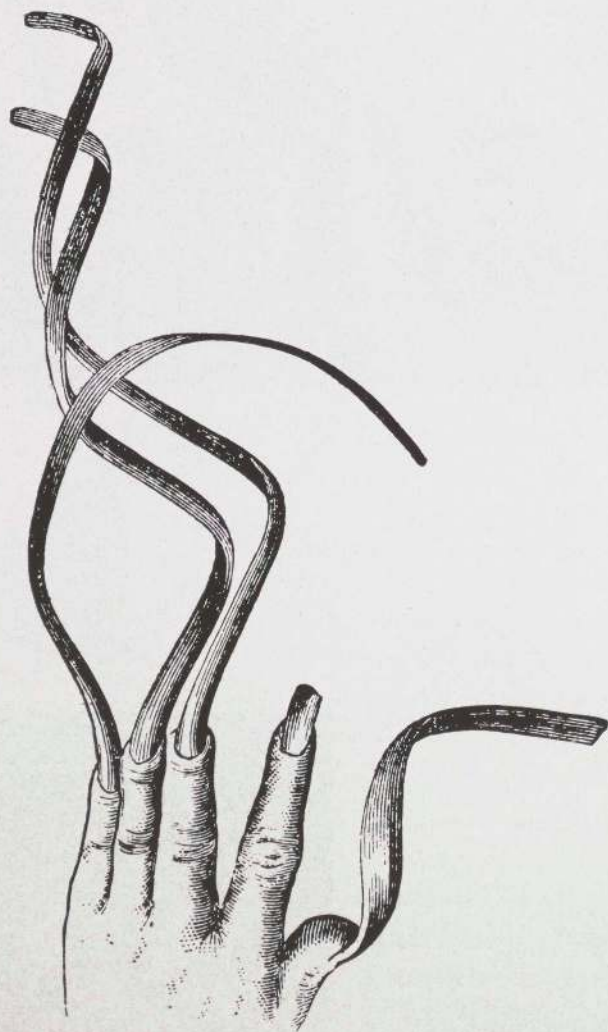
*Double ear clip, 1946.  
Courtesy John Rubel Co.*





abandonment of realism in the art of painting was accompanied by a parallel change in body painting. The artist who felt that his urge for expression should not be limited by tradition, and freely depicted human hair as blue and white skin as yellow, has a counterpart in the fashionable woman who with equal creative freedom uses the newly available cosmetics to dye her hair blue and to paint her face yellow. Whether there is much connection between the two phenomena remains conjectural. It is, however, a fair guess to say that modern body painting is only at the start of its development.

The relatively harmless and inexpensive custom of modern skin painting is accompanied by the doubtful practices of body sculpture. Men and women, quite consciously acquire and dispose of body weight, often at the expense of health, and most of the time, with the sacrifice of comfort. Where masting and fasting fails to give the expected results, commercial contraptions are used to simulate the desired change. But, unlike the mania for body coloring,



*At left: Chinese ascet's hand.*

*From Taylor's Anthropology.*

*On opposite page: Magazine advertisement.  
1942. Courtesy Associated Products, Inc.*



the plastic body art does not profit from our discovery of the primitives. Here, racial conscience seems to play a role. The human body, as presented in modern art, looks anything but the conventionally approved hellenic type of official statuary and murals. It is plainly negroid. This is all the more remarkable as racial questions are still far from being handled with fairness and intelligence in countries dominated by a strong Anglo-Saxon element.

In modern art, man and woman have such generous forms that we no longer compare their physique with that of our own. We may learn from this fact that the artist, being by far more sensitive and seldom bothered by momentary fashions, instinctively makes the better choice. To support his predilection, he could—if he cared—quote scientists and philosophers. Five generations ago, an English essayist wrote on the relativity of taste: "The sable Africans view with pity and contempt the marked deformity of all Europeans; whose mouths are compressed, their noses pinched, their cheeks shrunk, their hair rendered







*Overabundance of feminine forms in women is favored by many modern artists. Above: Gaston Lachaise's bronze statuette, Woman, ca. 1918, Collection Gustave B. Garfield. At right: Detail from Fernand Leger's Le grand déjeuner, 1921. Courtesy Museum of Modern Art.*



*For comparison the prehistoric Venus of Willendorf.  
Courtesy Museum of Natural History.*



lank and flimsy, their bodies lengthened and emaciated, and their skins unnaturally bleached by shade and seclusion, and the baneful influence of a cold humid climate. Were they to draw an image of female perfection, or a goddess of love and beauty, she would have a broad flat nose, high cheeks, wooly hair, a jet black skin, and a squat thick form." Should the example of oriental and modern occidental art fail to substantiate the legitimacy of feminine forms in feminine bodies, we might remember that the taste of the sophisticated modern painter or sculptor is congenial to that of the unlettered peasant and the primitive. "What more infallible criterion can there be for judging of the natural taste and inclination of mankind," asks the same writer, "than the unsophisticated sentiments of the most natural and original of the species? We can neither weigh nor measure the results of feeling or sentiment; and can only judge whether they are just and natural, or corrupt and artificial, by comparing them with the general laws of nature; that is, with the general deductions, which we make from the particular operations of nature, which fall under our observation: for of the real laws of nature we know nothing; these deductions amounting to no more than rules of analogy of our own forming."<sup>32</sup>

Of course, neither taste nor emotions derived from the esthetic content of the human body can explain its eternal appeal and challenge to experimentation. It is plainly the erotic factor which accounts for its fascinating qualities. Little known are yet the reciprocal effects between erogeneous body zones and body painting or body modeling; a systematic investigation is still to be





undertaken. From the sporadic attempts of scientists to throw light upon the matter we have learnt to recognize that body art—that is the use of the human body itself as the artist's medium instead of as his inspiration—preceded all other artistic occupations.<sup>33</sup> The first efforts of the artist were localized on the body, being the focus of his sexual instincts. Even in our days the artistic interest of the primitive is invariably centered on his body.

Erogenous faculties are not limited to special organs, but are proper to the entire surface of the body. There is little doubt that cicatrization or scar tattooing intensifies enormously the cutaneous allurements of the body. Similarly, gratifying erotic sensations of a more passive nature can be derived from the pressure of tight wearing apparel. Among savages, tattooing and circumcision are often performed as part of their initiation rituals; our own binding of waist and feet betrays its sexual significance by the fact that its observance commences with puberty. Likewise we deny the more innocuous painting of face and extremities to the immature female.





*There are periods when Western woman leaves the impression that she thinks with envy of a Hottentot's protruding buttocks. At any rate, as the illustration shows, she sometimes compensates for her fancied deficiency by availing herself of better and bigger imitations.*

*Left: Hypertrophy of the nates is a characteristic of the Hottentot women. Gonaqua Hottentot from Fritsch, Die Eingeborenen Südafrikas.*

*Facing page: American evening dress, ca. 1885. Courtesy Museum of the City of New York.*

At no time has the human body been exempt from man's endeavor of correcting and changing; the intellectual powers of modern man have not dulled his desire for performing the aberrations of cave-men and aboriginals. Religious and civic laws never had more than a soothing effect; they actually never succeeded in banning a body fashion altogether. The physician of recent times, much like the charlatan of the Middle Ages and the witch-doctor of the jungle, had no wish to interfere with the abuse of the human physique. In the few instances where he tried to reform current habits, he soon realized his utter impotence and lack of authority. We can not make a prognosis of future body ideals; it may be safe to say, however, that our mania for aping the creator will stay on for a long while. We are still very far from having achieved the serenity and civility which we so ardently believe we possess.

Perhaps the extreme instance of blasphemy is related in a small book, published by the Geographical Society of Lisbon: *Autoplastia*—or the transformation of man into animal, as formerly practiced in China.<sup>34</sup> Dealing with



Before



After

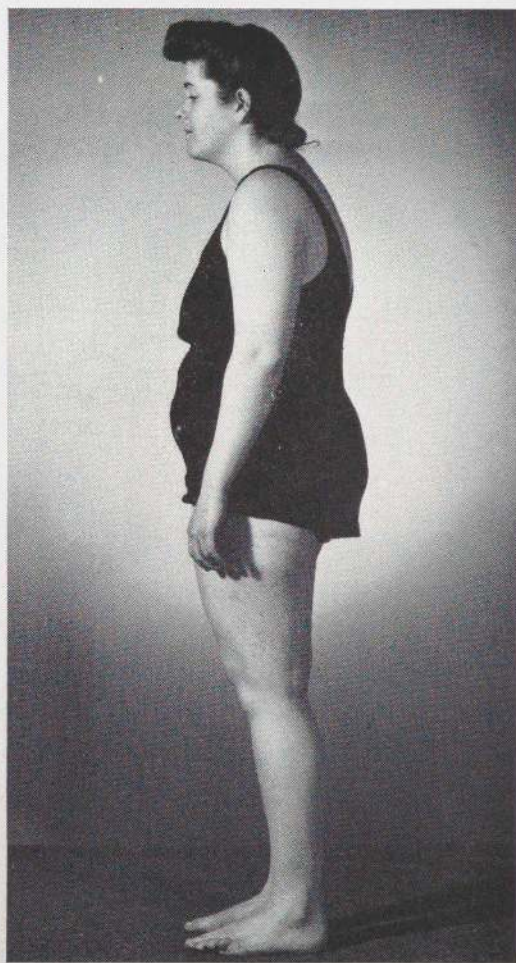


the gradual transplantation of animal skin unto human bodies, this book's subject seems to be far off from our theme of body covering. However, the technique related in that horror story is intrinsically the same as used in modern skin transplantation. If the experiences accumulated in two world wars will be used or misused for everyday consumption, an era full of surprises in body changing may be initiated. At present, the wish to acquire a new and better physical appearance is in most cases still outweighed by a desire of retaining one's identity. The current vogue of overhauling obese women to restore their original proportions, comes often dangerously near to the obliteration of their personal characteristics. In extreme cases, the comparison of past and present appearance evokes sentiments of pity and horror.

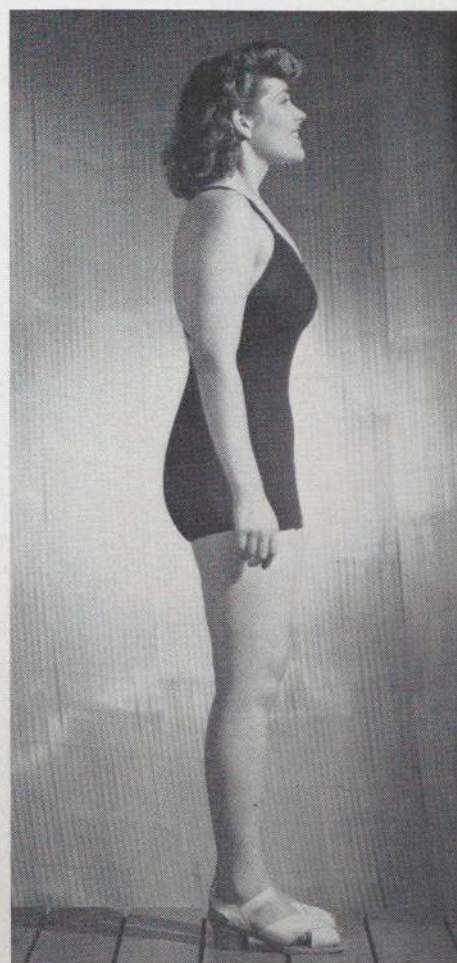
To judge from prehistoric sculpture, interest was mostly focused on fat women. Among primitives we find an outspoken predilection for obese women. Steatopygia is highly valued by the Hottentots. The bustle of the seventies—a gross illusion of steatopygia—was an esthetic experiment that



**Before**



**After**



*Fattening of young girls precedes marriage among some African tribes. The reverse procedure is favored among us.*

*At right: American girl, photograph courtesy Richard Hudnut Salon and Dubarry Success School.*

*Opposite page: African girl. From Man magazine, 1925.*

earned undivided success. Excessive fattening of young girls as practiced among Negro tribes in Africa is an important social function which precedes marriage.<sup>35</sup> At the arrival of puberty the youngster is kept in solitude and is submitted to a special diet which produces abundant fat deposits.<sup>36</sup> The time of seclusion is in direct proportion to the financial status of the parents of the prospective bride and varies from several weeks to two years.<sup>37</sup> The place for the masting is a special fattening-house.

It seems that the amassing of flesh was originally identified with the strengthening of the physique. But, evidently, only women of leisure could afford the luxury of immobility. Thus, the over-fed woman became identified with the well-to-do, and obesity became a desirable—and esthetic—quality. The possession of a well-nourished spouse is still a sign of prosperity also among Latin races. The Anglo-Saxon ideal is quite the opposite. In our days, so-called success schools run by cosmetic shops advise the young woman aspiring to marital happiness to undergo a procedure similar to the one of the African girl—only in reverse.



Various systems of deforming the head.  
 From Dembo and Imbelloni, *Deformaciones*.

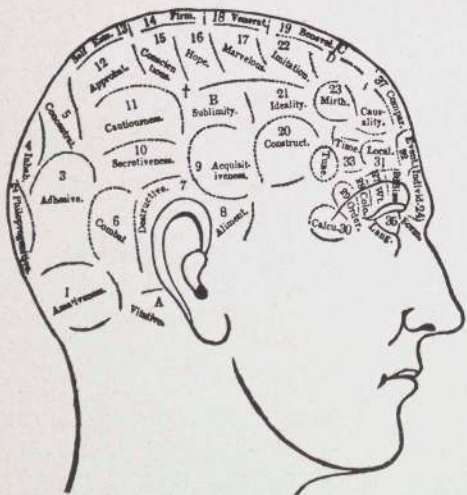
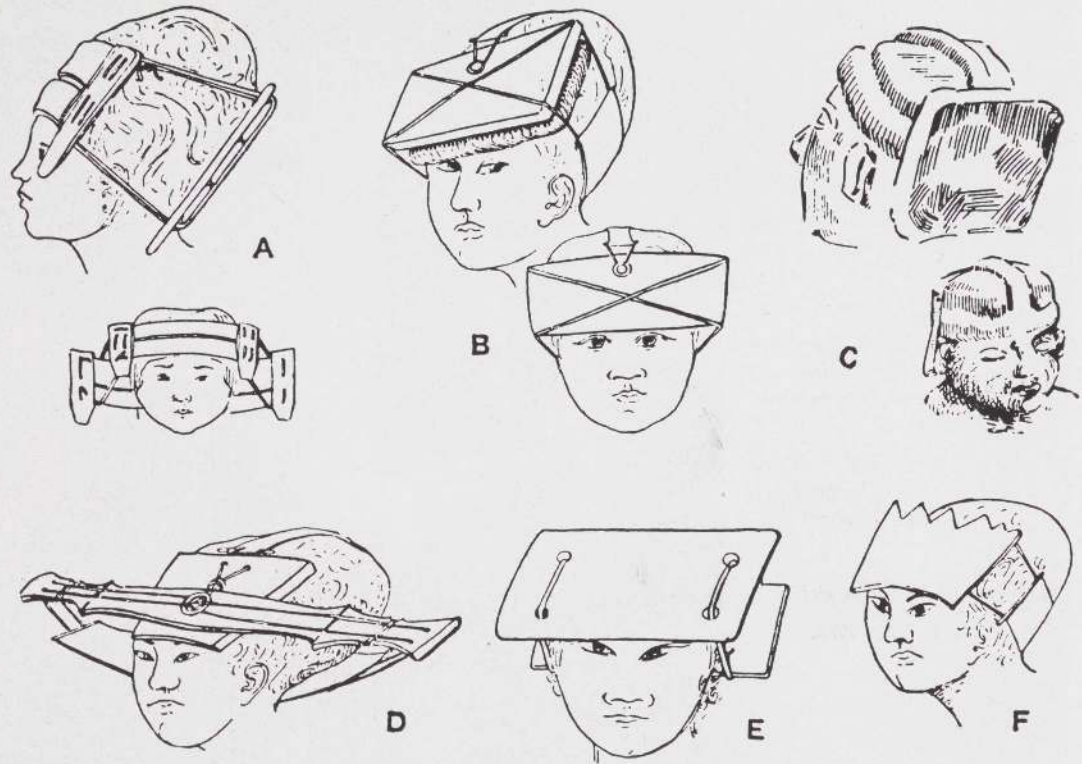


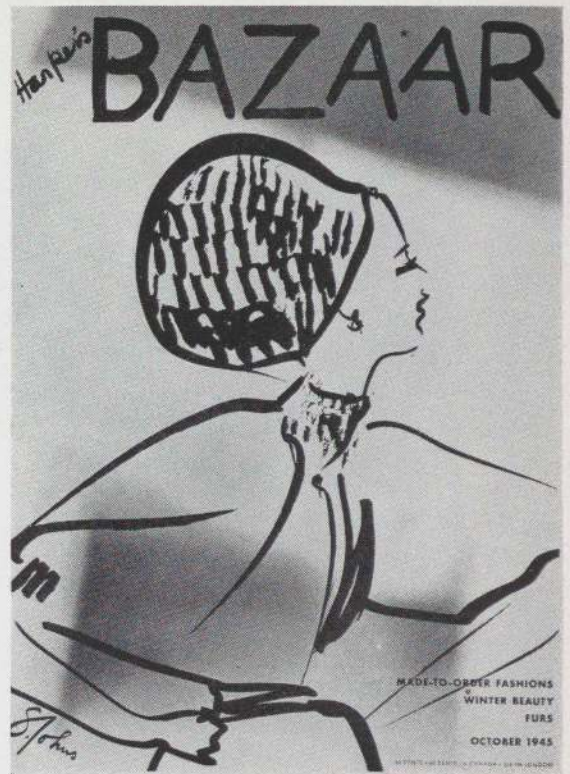
Diagram of phrenological organs.  
 From *Phrenological Journal*, 1842.

Among the more audacious undertakings of body changing is the molding of the head. Although esthetic notions of head contours foreign to the natural shape are wide-spread and deeply rooted, it is nevertheless believed that the first provocation to a mother's pinching and kneading her baby's skull was its inviting softness. From this playful handling sprang probably all the conscious efforts of deformation, into which only later racial and ceremonial concepts were artificially interpolated. An arsenal of contraptions served the binding and pressing of the cranium into cones, wedges or cylinders. Admiration for elongated head forms were shared at such distant epochs and dissimilar peoples as the ancient Egyptians, the American Indians and the provincial French.<sup>38</sup> In France, the binding of children's heads was still observed in some localities during the nineteenth century. For the benefit of the reader who cannot discern any advantage in this custom, the viewpoint of one Jesuit, Father Josset, is revealing. He believed that by shaping the head skeleton, one could shape one's vocation and future talents; he actually advised mothers to work on their new-born children's heads, so that their offspring might in due time produce great orators.<sup>39</sup>



Headdresses simulating an elongated cranium are often as effective as the real abnormality.

Courtesy Harper's Bazaar.



American Indians (Chinook).

From Domenek, Voyage pittoresque dans les déserts du nouveau monde, 1862.

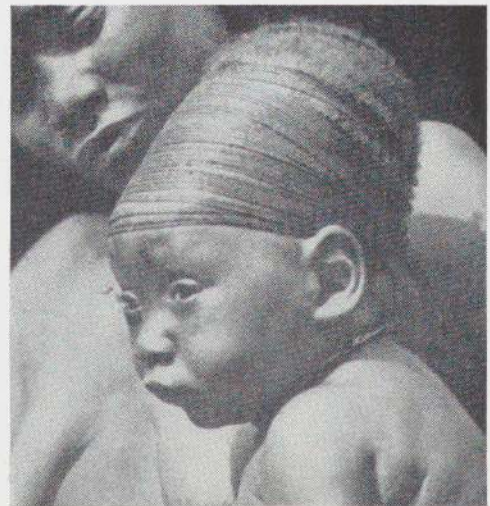






*Chinese mendicant friar.*

*From Ceremonies et coutumes religieuses  
de tous les peuples du monde etc., 1723.*



*African Negro baby with bound head.  
World copyright Lady Broughton.*



*Burmese woman with neckrings.*  
*Courtesy Museum of Natural History.*



*"Theatre blouse," 1898.*  
*From Bott and Clephane, Our Mothers.*



Dispensable as art is to the average self-sufficient individual, the more immediate art of plastic deformation never fails to attract his interest. To judge from traditional customs, but equally from the momentary fashions, the individual apparently derives an intensification of his self-appreciation. The petty satisfaction attached to following a new beard fashion is to him as important as the permanent sense of race superiority conveyed by submission to ritual mutilation. Circumcision, which does not achieve any corporeal improvement but is simply a tribal mark of distinction, is endlessly performed by the medicine man in the bush as well as by his modern colleague in the most up-to-date clinic. To rationalize racial superstition, an entire literature was produced dealing with the prepuce—as an apology for its mutilation.<sup>40</sup>

Man's obsession with violating his body, for which he takes such pains to find reasons, is not only of mere anthropological interest; it gives us a cue for understanding the irrationality of his body coverings. There happen to be lucid moments, occasionally, when we glance with amazement at the fraud we so passionately perpetrate on our bodies—dislocated bones and organs, bumps and bruises and afflictions. To appease such momentary insight, we have devised moral consolation, sticking-plaster for our lacerated souls. The genuine confusion of our mind and the nausea of our senses are propitious to sophisms. An automatic defense mechanism driven by bad conscience paralyzes our judgement so that right and wrong change places. Thus, when injuries from wearing a corset were recognized in all its consequences, the fashion which provided men with an inexhaustible appetite for swooning females was saved from abandonment by conveniently injecting moral values into the custom of lacing.

The fanatical allegiance to the wasp-waist ideal seems absurd to most contemporaries. However, womankind of thirty years ago not only looked upon the corset as a legitimate garment, but found it somewhat of a fountain of moral virtues. If scepticism should prevail on this fact, records describing the outbursts of indignation which accompanied the presence of uncorseted

*Cretan with waist ring.*  
*From Evans, The Palace of Minos at Knossos.*







women should dispel any doubts. People who lived in what we may call, from the point of view of costume, in a crustaceous age, thought of the whalebone corset as of a kind of armor of Jeanne d'Arc, both physical and moral. No wonder therefore that an unlaced waist was identified by pious citizens as a vase of sin. Isadora Duncan, who was heralded by Rodin and other connoisseurs of the human physique as the embodiment of Greece, only helped to strengthen the public belief that the lack of corset and shoes were the visible signs of utter depravity.

An American sociologist concedes that during the last century the corset was held to be nearly indispensable to a socially blameless standing. "The corset is, in economic theory, substantially a mutilation, undergone for the purpose of lowering the subject's vitality and rendering her personally and obviously unfit for work. It is true, the corset impairs the personal attractions of the wearer, but the loss suffered on that score is offset by the gain in reputation which comes of her visibly increased expensiveness and infirmity."<sup>41</sup>



The "Wisp" — tiny wasp-waist belt which swept the Paris openings. Little boned miracle, it subtracts up to two inches from the middle for wear under new reed-waisted gowns—is even the darling of Paris's slim mannequins. Macy's adaptation in gros-grain and boning, 7.04. Corset Salon, Second Floor. No mail, phone orders.

*At right: Advertisement, 1946.*

*Courtesy of Macy's.*

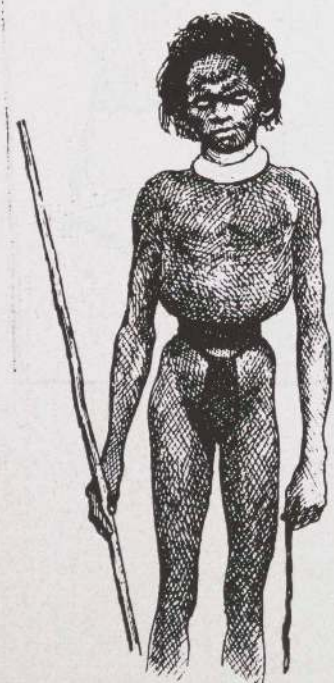
*Facing page: Prehistoric wisp. Fragmentary mural, seventeenth or eighteenth century B.C.*

*From Evans, The Palace of Minos at Knossos.*

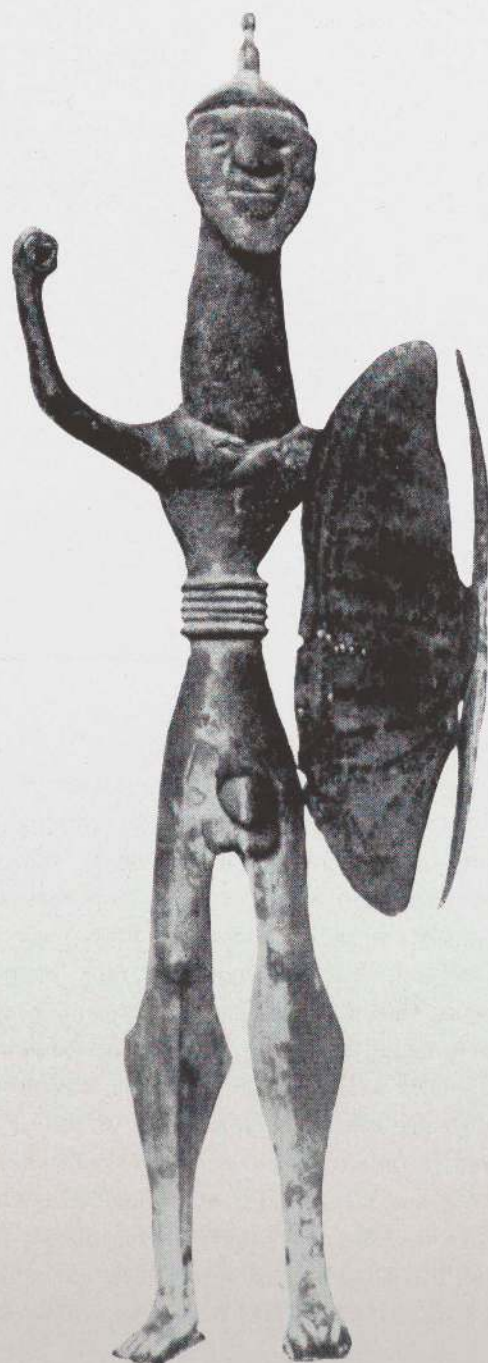
In archaic Greece the wasp waist was a male prerogative. Very accurate documents from Crete in the form of fragmentary murals and bas-reliefs testify to this. Male waists similar to those from Knossos were found in neolithic art; narrow female waists that could not have been achieved without a helping hand are pictured in ancient Indian sculpture. Today, waist constriction is still esteemed and perfected among the male population of some islands, like the Papua. Only little more than a generation ago, the various contraptions for deforming the female torso were temporarily discarded among us. These corsets were marked by a very advanced technique of disfigurement; though the actual mechanism with its stays and ribbons was crude and uninspired, the effects were complex and peremptory. The withering away of the waist was accompanied by a simultaneous inflation of the chest and the buttocks, the latter being perfected ingeniously by the invention of bustles. Although in our civilization constriction was adopted mainly by women, sometimes men, too, felt obliged to partake in this custom. We read



in the Springfield Republican of 1903: “. . . the corset mania has begun with the military men—they compare notes on corsets in some of the army clubs as gravely as they discuss the education bill at the National Liberal Club. Few . . . use rouge, but blacking the eyebrows is common. It is a great improvement to men.”<sup>42</sup> An effort to revive the laced-bodice towards the end of war, 1945, illustrates the undying optimism and bad taste of the businessman. A New York department store advertised several versions of a laced corset with the glib assurance that “it draws in your waistline to nothing.”<sup>43</sup>



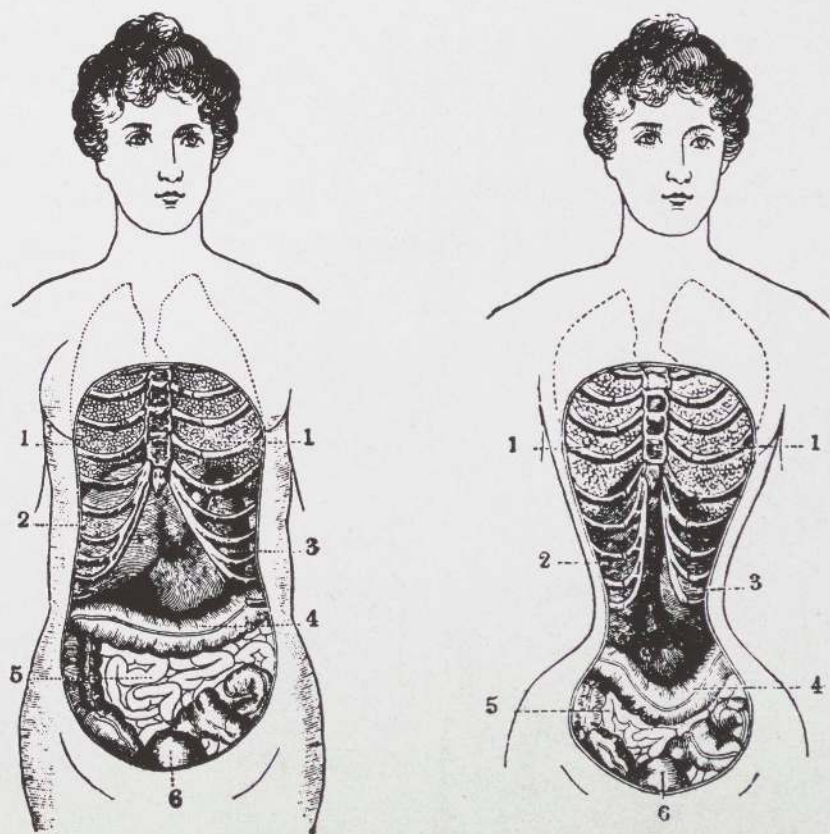
*Above: Papuan with wasp waist.  
From Dembo and Imbelloni, Deformaciones.*



*At right: Body constriction achieved with  
waist ring. Archaic Greek statuette at  
the National Museum at Athens.  
From Cahiers d'art, 1933.*



The effects on the human organism resulting from modern waist constriction were always known, or suspected. However the qualified advocate of health and sensible behaviour, the physician, was reluctant to interfere. His protests were voiced timidly, at any rate ineffectively, and today we cannot but suspect that he was unwilling to rouse the wrath of his clients. Apparently he shied from denouncing the corset for fear that he would be considered immoral, and he compromised by underwriting various health corsets, whatever they might have been.<sup>44</sup>

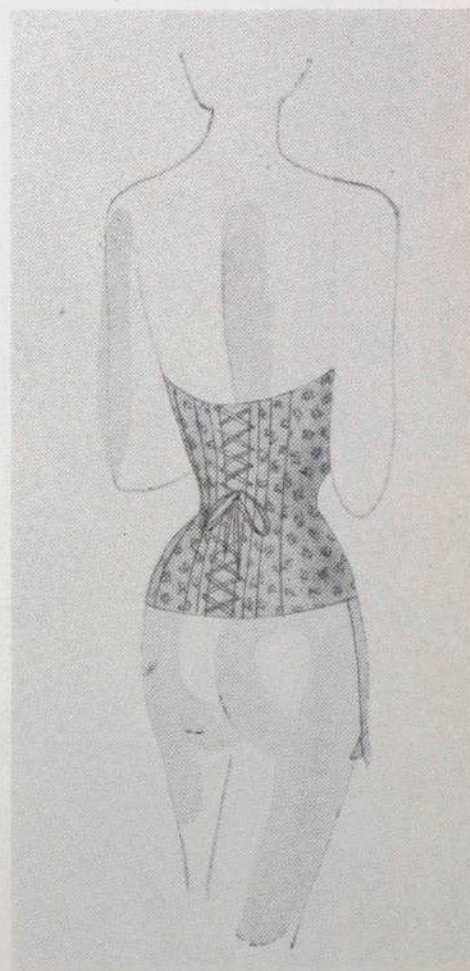


*Above: Effects of lacing on the female body. (1-lungs, 2-liver, 3-stomach, 4-great-gut, 5-small intestine, 6-bladder).*

*From Reform-Moden-Album, 1904.*

*At right: Wartime laced corset. "It draws in your waistline to nothing," promised the fashion writer.*

*From Harper's Bazaar, 1945.*





Sarah Bernhardt. From *Le Rire*, 1896.





# WARNER'S RUST-PROOF SUMMER CORSETS EVERY PAIR GUARANTEED

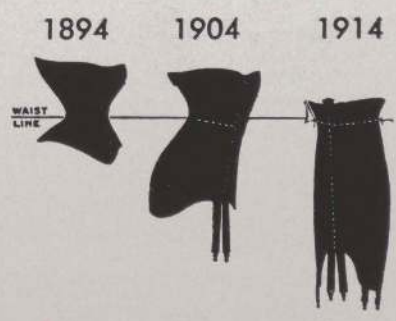
A NECESSITY FOR SUMMER WEAR



<b>Straight Front, Bias Gored, Batiste.</b>	<b>Regular Shapes, Summer Net.</b>
Light, Short..... \$4.50 per doz.	No. 471, Short..... \$5.50 per doz.
Classic, Young Ladies..... \$6.50 per doz.	No. 46, Medium..... \$4.50 per doz.
Country, Short..... \$6.00 per doz.	No. 44, Long..... \$5.50 per doz.
Classic, Medium..... \$12.00 per doz.	
<b>Straight Front, Bias Gored, Summer Net.</b>	<b>Girdle, Summer Net.</b>
Classic, Short..... \$5.50 per doz.	No. 24..... \$4.50 per doz.
Classic, Short..... \$5.00 per doz.	
Classic, Medium..... \$12.00 per doz.	<b>Girdle, Batiste.</b>
	No. 27..... \$4.50 per doz.
<b>Regular Shapes, Batiste.</b>	<b>Empire, Summer Net.</b>
Light, Short..... \$6.50 per doz.	No. 185..... \$6.20 per doz.
Light, Medium..... \$7.50 per doz.	<b>Empire, Batiste.</b>
Light, Long..... \$8.50 per doz.	No. 22..... \$4.50 per doz.

THE WARNER BROS. CO. NEW YORK CHICAGO SAN FRANCISCO

Advertisement from Dry Goods Economist, 1901.



From Warnergram, 1944.





*American fashion illustration, 1902.*

*From the Picture Collection of the New York Public Library.*



For some inexplicable reason, every generation develops a craving for the support of some part of the anatomy. In the era of the corset, the female skeleton was thought to be different from the male's. Somehow, the belief prevailed that woman had skipped the evolution of man, and that without a corset she might have to go back to walking on all four extremities. To insure her upright position, she needed support.<sup>45</sup>

There was also a time when both sexes went through life ankle-supported. Shoes which did not reach well above the ankle were considered disastrous to health—what has become of ankle support, once so warmly recommended by doctors and shoe salesmen? The fallacy has not vanished completely. The infant who makes his first steps is invariably put into boots by the ignorant parent. The average physician who knows little about feet and walking, praises such procedure or may even prescribe it. Adults wear low shoes today. In a million pedestrians there is hardly more than one wearing boots. Fashion has changed. Now, many doctors underwrite "arch support" and the "medium-high heel." Even if they were less complacent and less incompetent, they still would recommend some kind of heel to their female clientele because they themselves are far from being immune to its erotic attraction.<sup>46</sup>

The natural shape of the human foot has not changed in historic times. It is the same today as it was when depicted in Egyptian sculpture. But although the unspoiled form of the foot is still shown in realistic art, we do not recognize what nature produces in life. With infinite patience we try all life long to reshape our extremities to make them conform with the ideal laid down unanimously by the shoe-manufacturers in the form of the shoe last. A glance at the bare feet of a middle-aged person, especially of a woman, convinces one easily that years of squeezing them has been amply rewarded.

Foot deformation is such an old and wide-spread custom that it has fostered the belief to be an institution pleasing to the Gods, like circumcision. Among the industrial nations, the deformed foot is an object of almost religious awe and, occasionally, of wholesome dread. In this country, the extensive and permanent occupation with foot ills and ill feet is a national characteristic. Entire professional groups seem to devote their energy to the task of keeping the people in a condition in which they can endure the painful but atoning procedure of foot deformation. An industry, steadily gaining in prominence, indefatigably produces new props and crutches and patches for the limping and sore. And ever expanding mechanization of the means of transport promises to relieve us completely from the humiliating task of using our feet for locomotion.

It should be said in all fairness that the manufacturers of modern foot containers actually never had a chance to make their dreams come true. They installed the most expensive machines to produce the perfect shoe, but to them the consumer has only been a source of irritation and disappointment. Human feet are defective. Their most obvious fault is their not being identical—after millions of years of human evolution, there still remains a



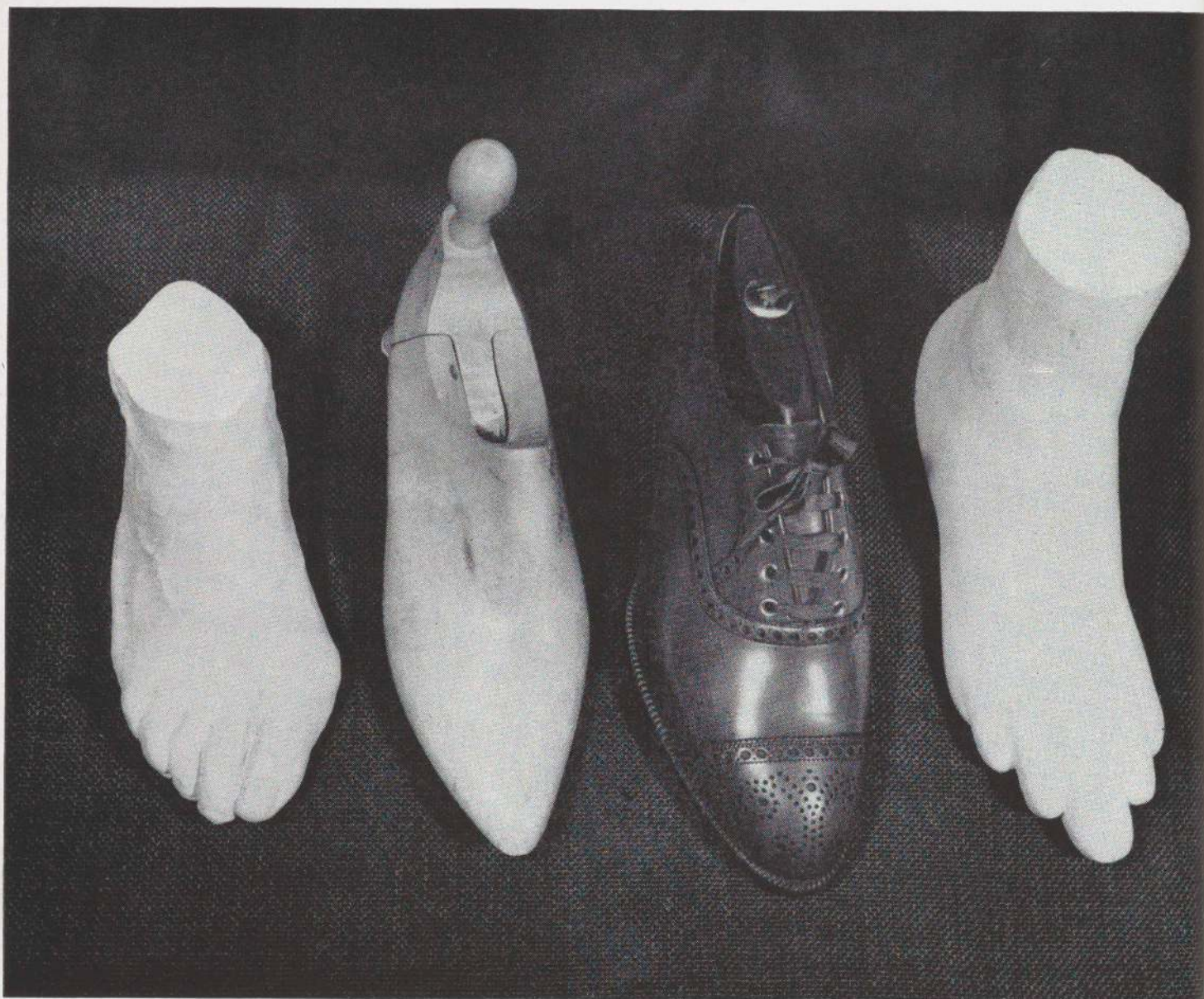
**The Family Shoe Stretcher**  
FOR MEN AND WOMEN  
Corns, Bunions, Callouses stop hurting  
and disappear if you remove the cause. **The Improved Family Shoe Stretcher**, the greatest device of the age for **foot-ease**, look at the picture, stretches the shoe where it should be stretched. Cures corns, bunions, tender spots **without medicines** because it removes pressure which is the cause of all foot trouble. Makes your shoes fit perfectly and wear longer; immediately produces ease and comfort—**eventually perfect feet.** Lasts a life-time. Endorsed by doctors and chiropodists. Write today for **FREE BOOKLET**, giving full particulars with list of everything for foot comfort.

Put knob where corn rubs  
No more corn

**THE PEDICURE CO., Dept. 137, Buffalo, N. Y.**

*"Eventually perfect feet."*  
Advertisement from  
Current Opinion, 1913.





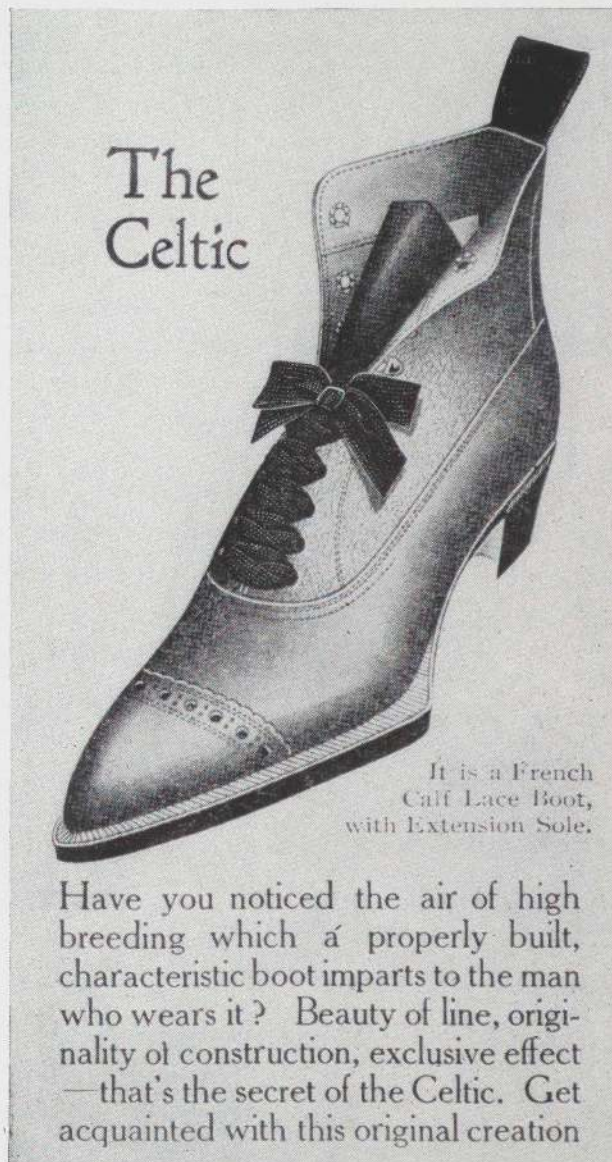
*The ultimate triumph of contemporary clothing is the symmetrical shoe, our deepest regret is our inability to develop a symmetrical foot. With infinite patience we try all our lives to reshape our feet to an ideal established by shoe manufacturers in the form of the "last." If the human foot were shaped like the shoe designed for it today, it would have the big toe in the middle.*

*From left to right: Plaster cast of an adult's deformed foot which has taken on the shape of a shoe; wooden last; present-day shoe; plaster model of an imaginary symmetrical foot which corresponds to the shoe manufacturer's idea of human anatomy.*



*Body deformation is closely linked to moral concepts and has therefore become a sign of respectability; our past and present tolerance of foot deformation is a case in point.*

*Advertisement from Harper's Weekly, 1904.*



The Celtic

It is a French Calf Lace Boot, with Extension Sole.

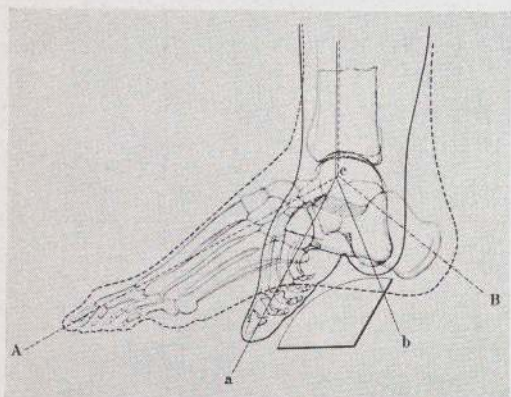
Have you noticed the air of high breeding which a properly built, characteristic boot imparts to the man who wears it? Beauty of line, originality of construction, exclusive effect—that's the secret of the Celtic. Get acquainted with this original creation

right and a left foot. Shoemakers have shown admirable patience with shoe-wearing people, but they never could understand why the lack of identical feet should not be compensated by making the right and left shoe identical. Should their ancient craft and vaunted ingenuity not be of any avail? The gravest set-back in their art occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century when the time-honored tradition of making one kind of shoe for both feet was abandoned for the whims of human anatomy. This was not only a regrettable relapse into primitivism, but was in contradiction with the noblest aim of dress—to hide body defects.

The Cinderella complex, the symmetrical shoe, the taboo on the toes of all older people—these are but different aspects of the same phenomenon. To gain a better comprehension of our own foot perversion, it is profitable to



disclose the irresistible charm that for eight hundred years was attached to Lily feet, the crippled Chinese female extremities. Legend tries to prettify the abomination, but the custom and its century-long persistence have stronger roots than folk tales admit. For one thing, bound feet were to the Chinese an object of highest esthetic order. The shape of the Lily foot is man-made; it is foreign to human anatomy. It always seems that man derives an infinitely stronger satisfaction from his art work—whatever crude manufacture it might be—than from the products of Nature.



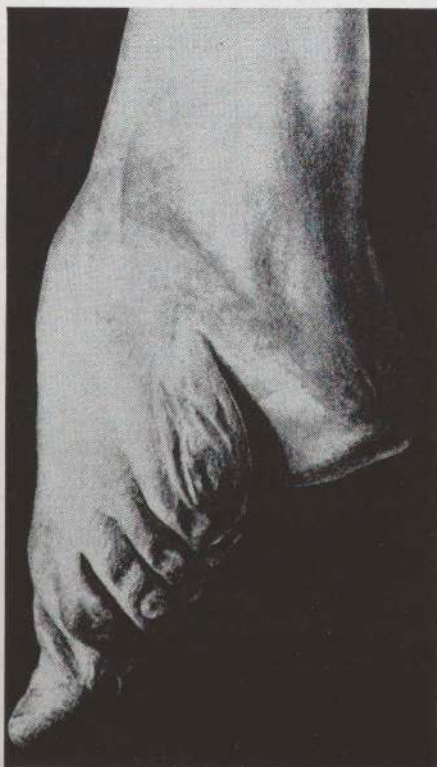
*Diagram comparing a shrunken Lily foot to a normally developed foot.*

*From Archiv für Anthropologie, 1870.*

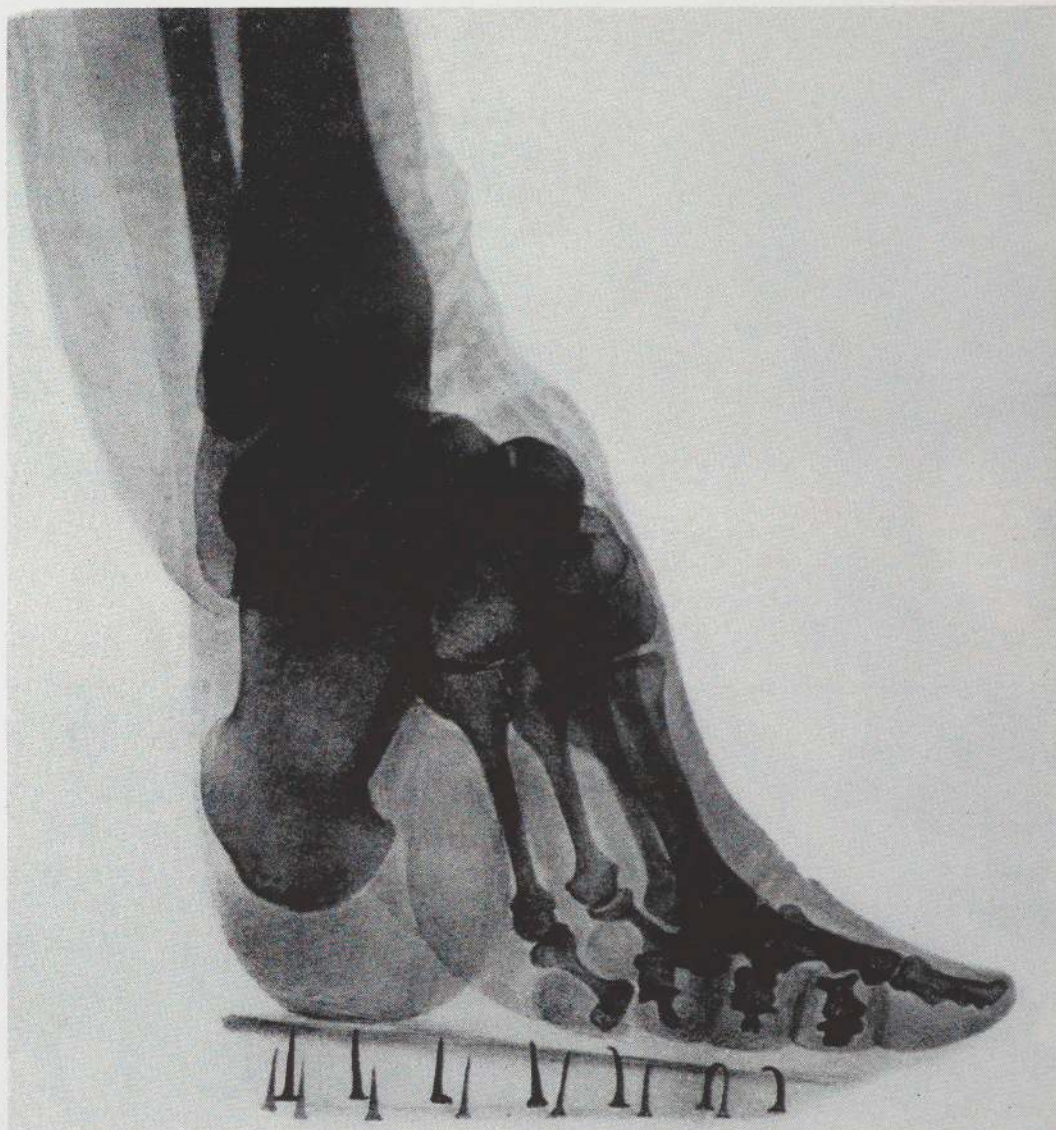
The pleasures of an esthetic nature are mingled with erotic delights. The incentive to Chinese footbinding was the lewdness of men, which helps to explain why Lily feet were unmentionable. In fact, to talk to a Chinese of his wife's feet was the gravest indecency. Nobody, not even the husband was ever allowed to see her naked feet.<sup>47</sup> In order to obey the law of their race, the mothers were obliged to inflict pain and bodily defect on their daughters. Christian nuns were helpless in combating the depravity, since a woman with normal feet was condemned to celibacy.<sup>48</sup>

A modern woman's foot is, as a rule, nothing much of an attraction; but the shoe—even the fragile and latticed one—covers mercifully its injuries and malformations. The male contents himself with admiration for the shoe, he derives gratification from woman's altered balance and gait. Though our foot-squeezing is as old as the Chinese custom, there is no prospect of its end.

*\* The custom of footbinding did not extend over the whole country. The Manchus, including the Imperial family, never practiced this mutilation.*







*Above, X-ray picture, at left, plaster cast of a Chinese woman's deformed foot.*

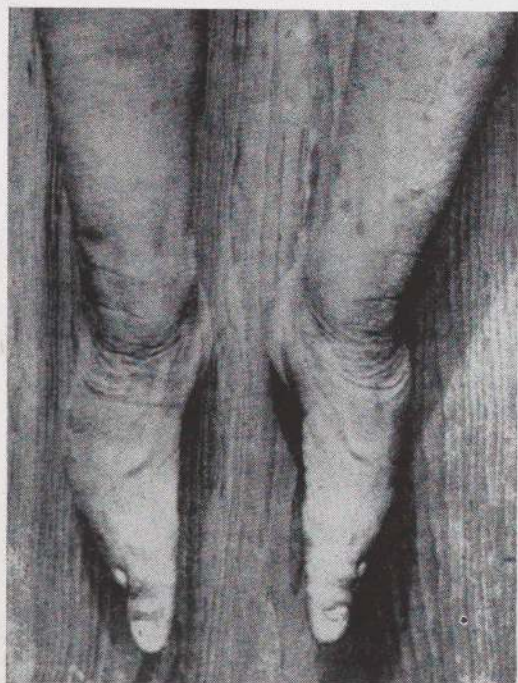
*The bulging instep of a modern woman, wearing high-heeled footwear, is reminiscent of the Chinese Lily foot.*

*From Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, 1903 and 1905.*



"It was a good world and men trod more upright, when our fore-fathers wore their shoes made after the shape of their feet" lamented the author of an anthropological work three hundred years ago.<sup>49</sup> During World War I, the war department found that only fifteen per cent of the conscripts were wearing shoes that fitted their feet.<sup>50</sup> Even General Grant, who wore square-toed shoes, criticized the American footwear: "I cannot afford to cripple myself," was his comment on the then current shoe fashions.<sup>51</sup>

The *Harper's Bazar Book of Decorum* sounded a similar note in 1873, only less epigrammatic. "The tight shoe or boot, too narrowly toed, is exclusively responsible for that painful affection, ingrowth of the toe-nail. If the affection



## The Comfortable Shoe that is *always* stylish!

A COMFORTABLE shoe that is stylish! You find it difficult to believe such a statement don't you? You have been accustomed to thinking you must have foot aches and pains if your feet are to appear well groomed!



Unless this trade-mark appears it is not a genuine ARCH PRESERVER SHOE. The exclusive arch construction offers firm support for the foot during the entire life



has been allowed to become inveterate, the surgeon must be called in, and he will probably resort to an operation, which, though almost bloodless, is considered one of the most painful of surgery. So painful, indeed, it is known to be, that a famous Parisian surgeon, Velpeau, was in the habit of passing a bandage around the toe, and directing a strong assistant to tighten it with all his might, in order to dull somewhat the sensibility of the part. The surgeon, grasping the toe, thrusts the sharp-pointed blade of a pair of scissors under the nail as far as it will go, and then, cutting it in two, tears out each half with a pair of pincers from the quivering flesh in which it has been long imbedded. No one, not even the slave of fashion, should submit to any form of boot or shoe other than the broad-toed.<sup>752</sup>

*Manufacturers never hesitated to affirm their belief that clothing should not only cover the body but shape it as well.*

*From a magazine advertisement.*



Boys and girls from two to sixteen require shoes that will correctly shape the growing foot—for the bones of their feet are soft, and can as easily be bent out of shape as they can be kept in shape.

Buster Brown Shoes embody new scientific principles in shoemaking. They are made over the famous Brown Shaping Lasts—that reproduce Nature perfectly in gradually changing sizes—and therefore correctly shape the growing foot, while giving style to the shoe.

*Opposite page: At far left, the correct shape of Lily feet. The custom of deforming female feet according to a racial ideal, persisted in China for eight hundred years. Women with undeformed feet provoked disgust in men and were condemned to celibacy.*

*From Friedenthal, Weib.*

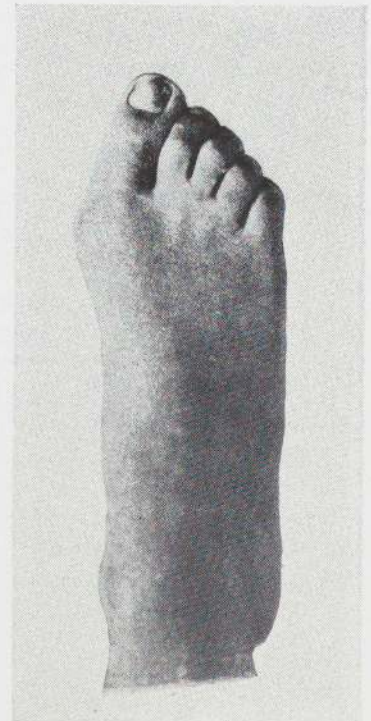
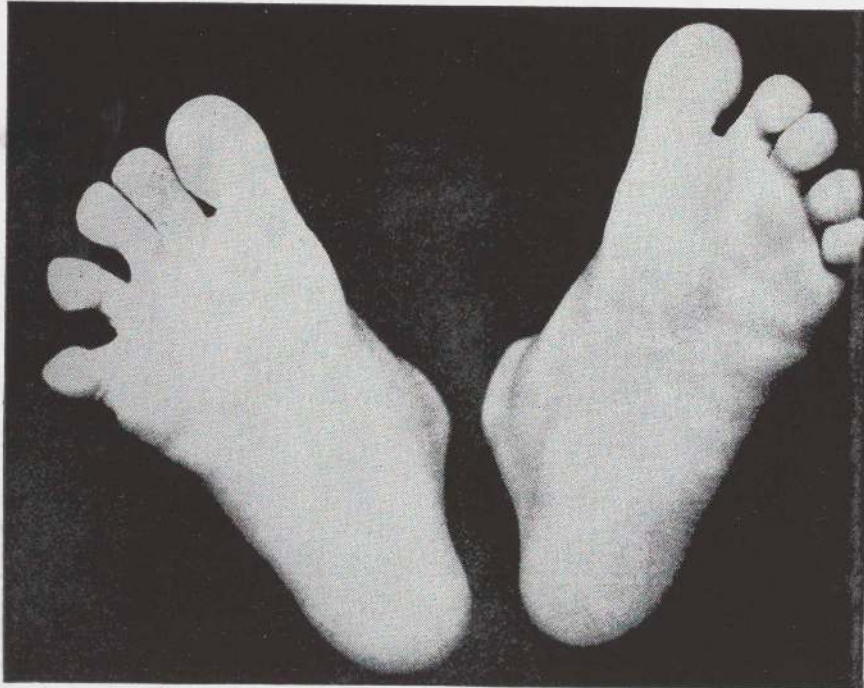
*Note how the 1920 model of a shoe seems to fit perfectly the crippled Chinese woman's foot.*

*From Delineator. Courtesy The Selby Shoe Company.*

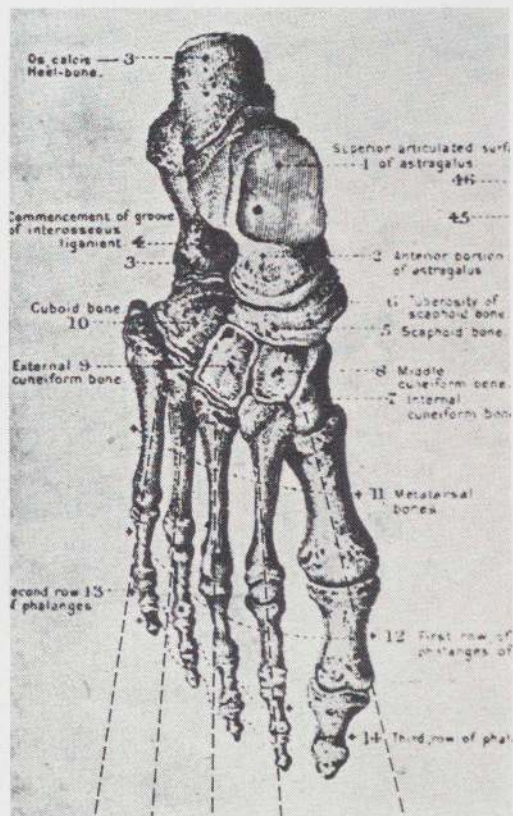
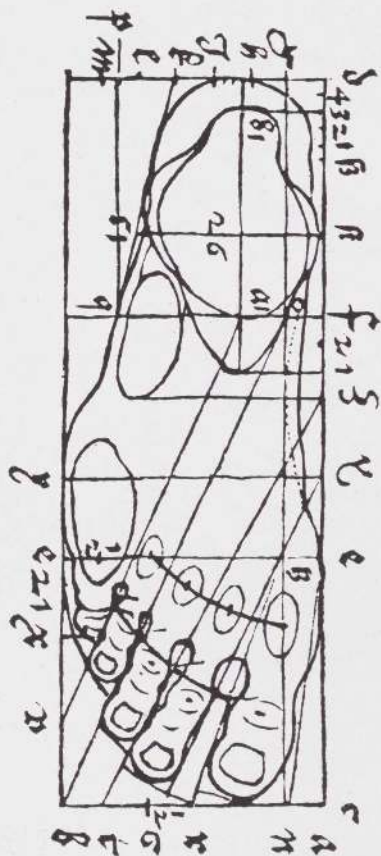


*The toes of the perfect foot are round, not square, and they spread out, fanlike, with plenty of space between them. They give good leverage and are free to grip the ground for balance.*

*The manufacturer's shoe today is made to fit the last, which has little in common with the delicate mechanism of the foot. Shoes made on these lasts destroy the foot's natural shape and action, if less so than foot binding of Chinese women used to do.*







*Wearing tight-fitting apparel has not only deformed our bodies but has obscured our knowledge of them. Left, an incorrect drawing from Dürer's Anatomy; right, skeleton from the American Encyclopedia, 1940, depicting a deformed foot. (The five dotted lines inked into the latter give the approximate position of uncorrupted toes.)*

*Dürer's ignorance is excusable, but how is the modern drawing of a crooked foot explained other than on the grounds that the foot, distorted by our footwear has become uncritically accepted by modern anatomists?*

*At bottom of opposite page a deformed adult foot which the shoe-manufacturer might consider well-shaped, that is, a foot that has taken on the form of a shoe.*



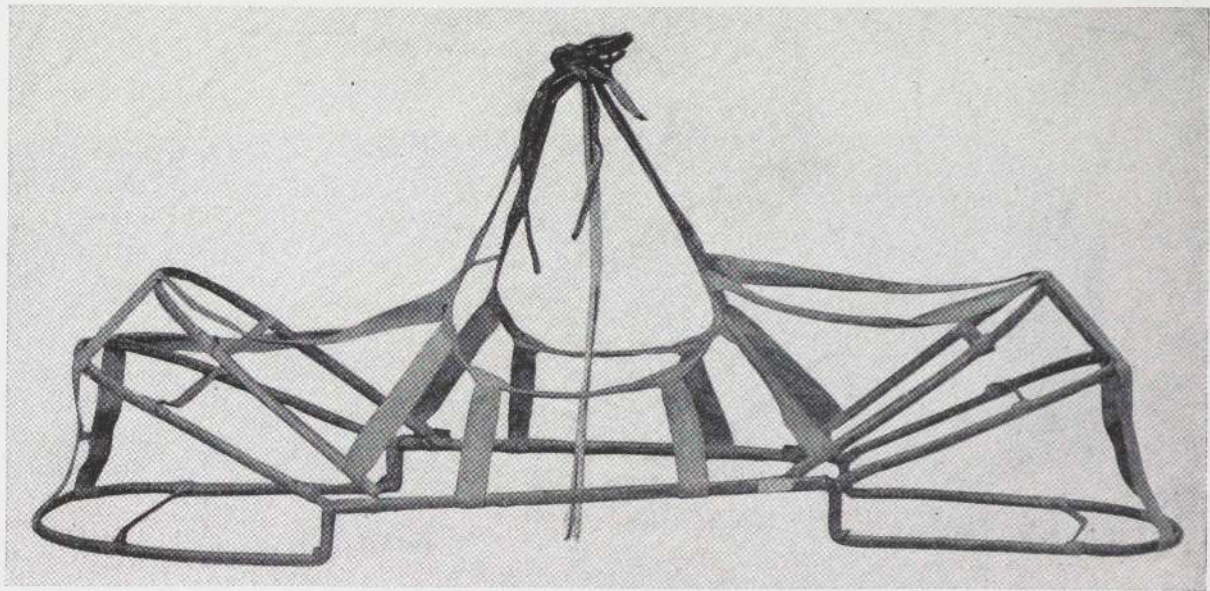
The farthingale, in shape roughly resembling an automobile tire, was the hip pad of the sixteenth century.



In body deformation the focal points are most carefully shielded by garments or decoration, while any direct gaze upon the misformed member is jealously forbidden or, still better, protected by a taboo. Such is the case with the stretched necks of African-Negro women, the Lily feet of Chinese women, our grandmothers' torsos, our own misformed toes. In order to protect fashion-addicts adequately, a modern taboo was established on bare feet. Though shoes and stockings were not essential articles in the old testamentary times, it is of interest to note that the Church does not admit worshippers who do not live up to prevailing dictates of fashion.

It is obvious from the foregoing that man's interference with his anatomy has a long history. At the present time quick changing fashions are welcomed by more enterprising businessmen as a boost to quick turnover of merchandise. The businessman's opportunity is provided by that secondary category of deformation which is not injurious to the body and depends on wearing elaborate contraptions simulating a changed physique, such as bustles, false bosoms, hip pads, elevations, etc. Mankind simply delights in the inexhaustible resources to get away from itself. With few exceptions,





*Bent wood farthingale. From the Picture Collection of the New York Public Library.*

*From an American advertisement, 1886.*

Patented—Aug. 25, 1885.  
Jan. 19, 1886.

**No. 2**  
or  
**TWO ROW.**  
**35** Cents.

Patented—Aug. 25, 1885.  
Jan. 19, 1886.

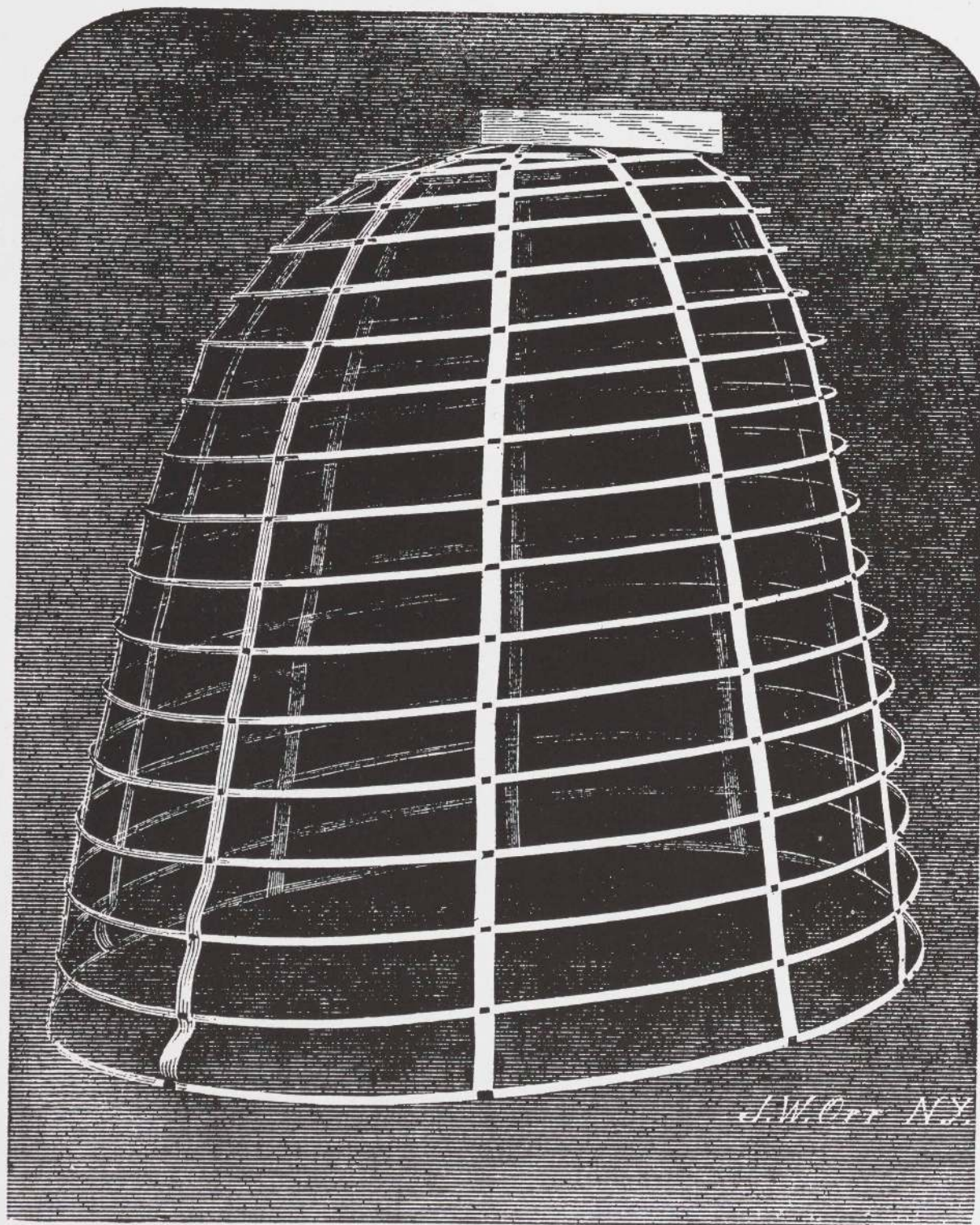
**No. 3**  
or  
**THREE ROW.**  
**ONLY 45** Cents.

**WESTON & WELLS' HEALTH BRAIDED WIRE BUSTLES.**  
Great Reduction in Price. Improved Quality.



# USEFUL NOVELTIES FOR THE MONTH

BY OUR "FASHION EDITOR."



WE take pleasure in presenting our readers with this new and useful article. It has, they will observe, many advantages. Among the most prominent of them is the shape, which is full of grace and beauty, a fact acknowledged by thousands of ladies and others, who saw it at the late fair at the Crystal Palace, New York, and elsewhere. Another of these advantages is the manner of making it: the tapes being fastened to the springs by means of a clasp, instead of being sewed; by which ripping is avoided. Moreover, as the skirt is made on a frame, each has the desired shape. In addition to this, the springs are made from the best



# Taylor's Woven Wire Bustles.

At right, advertisement from  
Dry Goods Economist.

Have you seen the wonderful  
**CUSHION** Wire Bustle?

Here It Is! It Leads Them All!

You can sit on it, stand on it or jump on it, and it comes  
right back into shape.



Cushion No. 2.  
\$2.00 per doz.



Cushion No. 3.  
Same shape as No. 2, but  
covered with stockinet.  
\$2.25 per doz.



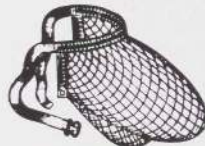
Cushion No. 1.  
Small cloth pad at top.  
\$2.25 per doz.



Cushion No. 4.  
Combination hip-pad and bustle.  
Covered with stockinet.  
\$4.50 per doz.

Send a sample order at once for CUSHION BUSTLES.  
You can send them back if you don't like them.

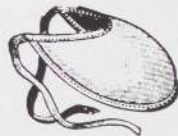
## Other Styles Wire Bustles.



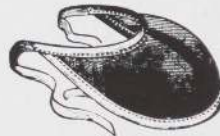
Parisienne Style X.  
White and black tempered  
wire.  
\$2.00 per doz.



Flexo No. 2.  
Silvered woven wire.  
\$2.00 per doz.



Vogue.  
Stockinet covered.  
\$2.25 per doz.



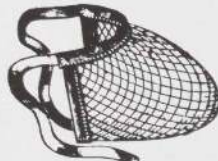
Elmo.  
Wire back pad.  
\$2.00 per doz.



Manhattan.  
Silvered woven wire cloth  
hip-pads.  
\$3.50 per doz.



Duchess.  
Hip-pad and bustle; silvered  
woven wire.  
\$4.50 per doz.



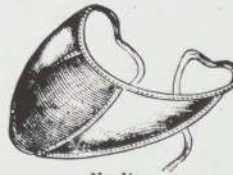
Newport.  
White or black wire.  
\$1.75 per doz.



Vassar.  
Combined wire hip-pad and  
bustle.  
\$3.50 per doz.



Wellesley.  
Stockinet covered.  
\$4.50 per doz.



Nordica.  
Small wire bustle with hair-  
filled hip-pad.  
\$2.25 per doz.



Zephyr Bosom Forms.  
Stockinet covered.  
\$2.25 per doz.  
Ventilating, \$1.75 per doz.



Gloria Bosom Forms.  
Oval in shape; trimmed with  
Valenciennes lace; stockinet  
covered. \$2.25 per doz.  
Ventilating, \$2.00 per doz.

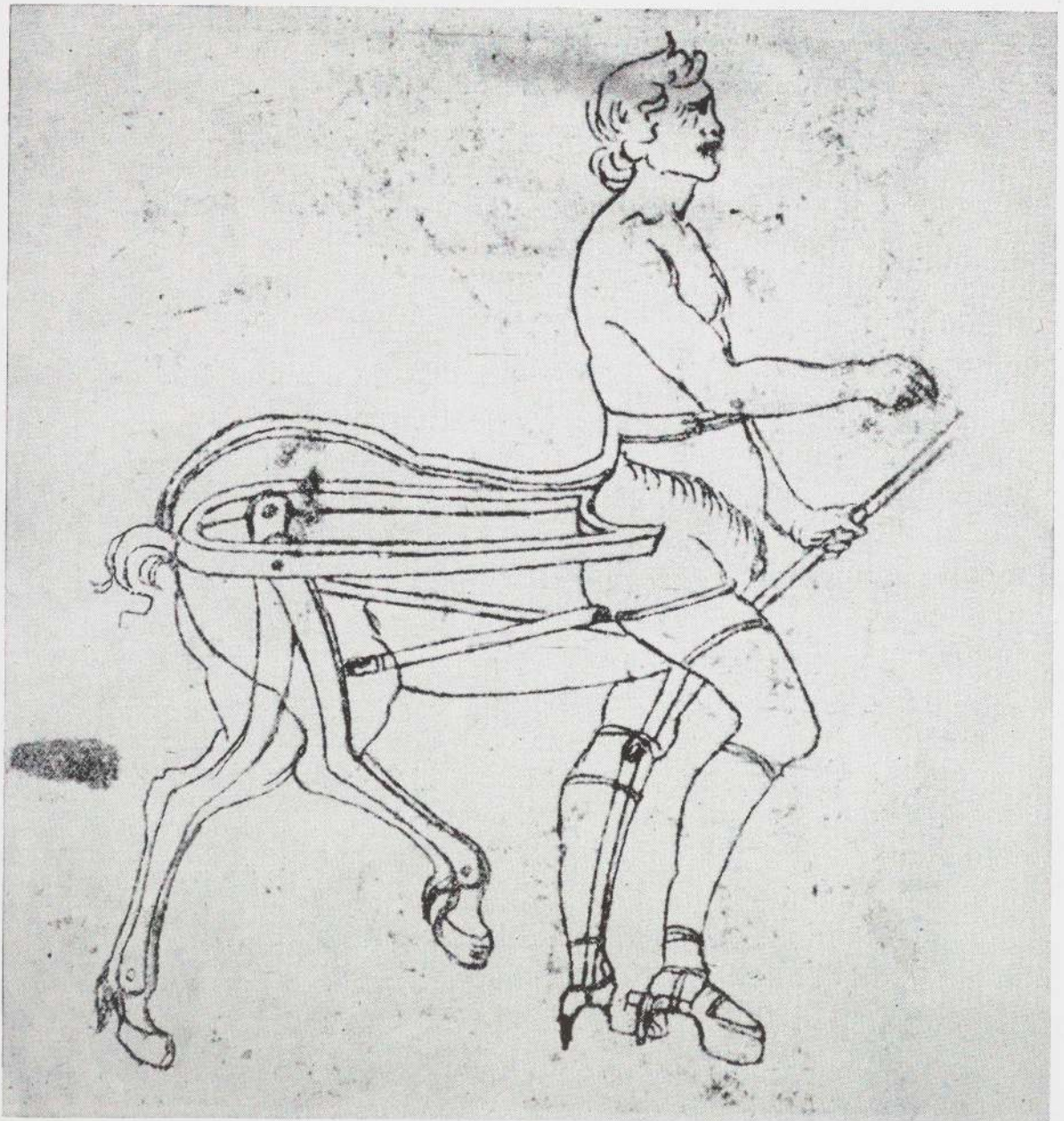
Opposite, a page from  
Peterson's Magazine, 1858.



people of every description and epoch show convincingly that they are infinitely bored with the natural formation of the body; they seem to see in it only the raw material for their daring creations. Deviation in taste from the Lord's ideal is merely regrettable, but disregard for the human mechanism should cause concern.

To enumerate all the devices which man invented in order to circumvent nature would be an almost endless task. The acquaintance with the follies documented in historic costume will be taken for granted. These are of lesser importance to us, as we have difficulty putting ourselves in the place of such remote people. Of foremost interest must therefore be those misrepresentations of body characteristics which are within our grasp—historically and

*Design for a stage centaur by Francesco di Giorgio.  
Collection Fairfax Murray, London.*



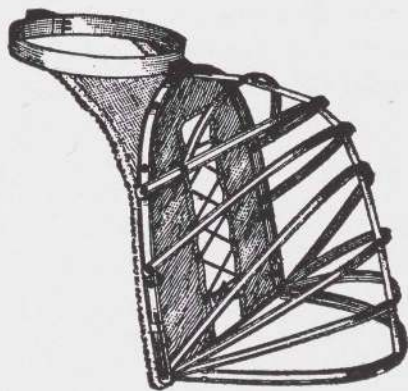


*From Leslie's Weekly, 1888.  
Courtesy Lucien T. Warner.*



*Taylor's Star Folding Bustle. "Light,  
Cool and Comfortable. Recommended  
by fashionable ladies. Always regains  
its shape after pressure."*

*Courtesy Lucian T. Warner.*

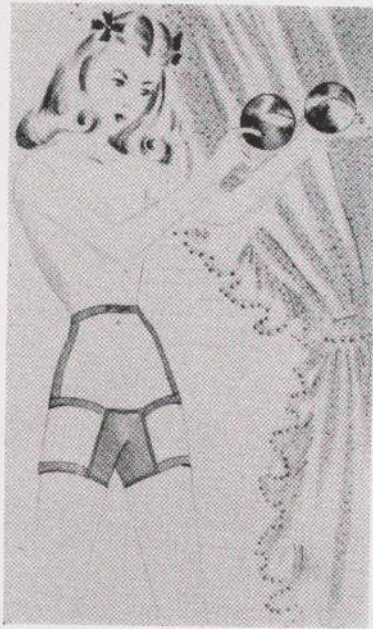


*American child, 1855.*

*From the Picture Collection of  
the New York Public Library.*







*The different shapes of breasts have inspired lovers and poets. Modern industry offers a uniform and coldly geometric shape to the perfection seeking customer.*

*"Gay Deceivers," 1936.*

*From Warnergram, March 1944.*

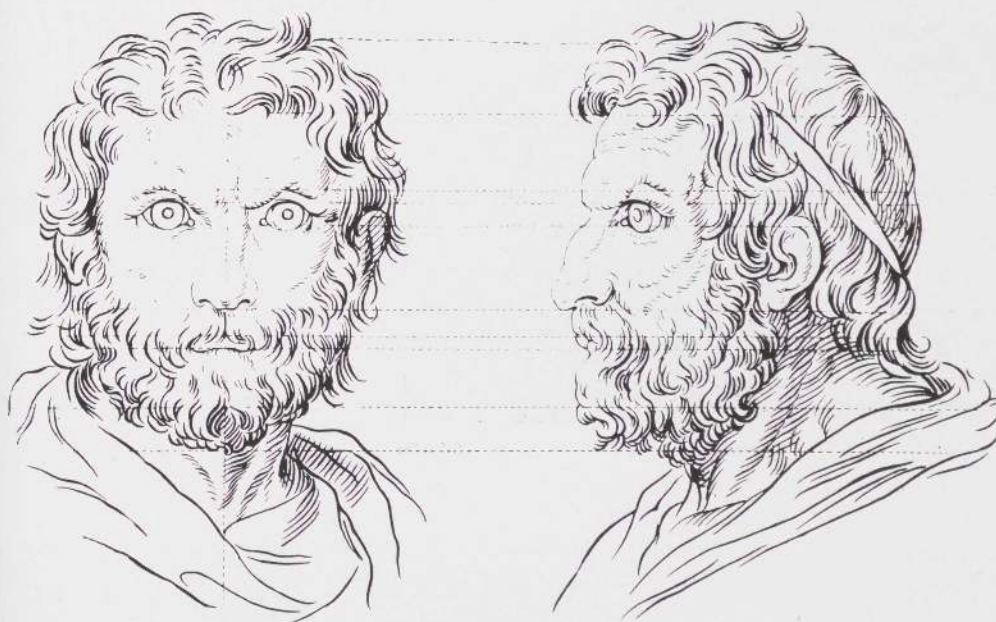
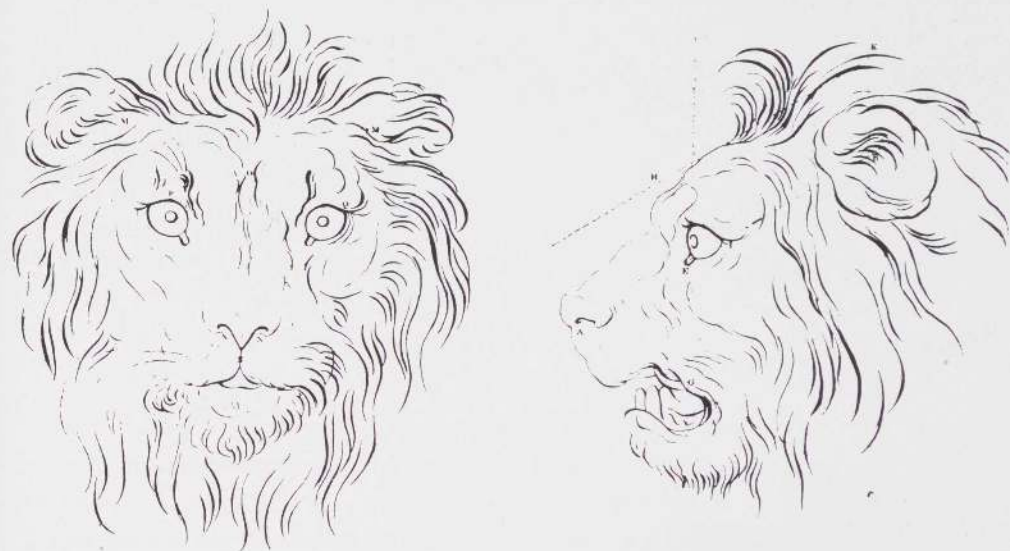
geographically. In other words, more information as to the nature of present-day clothing can be gathered from relatively recent fashions and fads, for the simple reason that there are enough people alive who experienced body ideals of extreme contrasts.

During the past generation, women's greatest triumph was in prolonging their youthful appearance beyond their own dreams. To be thirty years of age once marked the end of being desirable. This age limit was gradually stepped up, until it got lost altogether. Feeling eternally young and being every year eligible to partake in the joys of fashion results in a quite singular experience: the woman born before the turn of the century was a buxom maiden in accordance with the dictate of the day; photographs testify to the overgenerosity of her charms, though her tender age should make us suspicious of their authenticity. In the twenties, when maturity and multiple motherhood had come to her, the pictures record an angular creature, lean, flat-chested, pencil shaped. Paradoxically enough, because she did not want to renounce womanliness, she had to submit to the current and extremely unfeminine ideal. Today she is again rotund and commands the undiminished attention of men as ever. She has inflamed the imagination of three generations, each of which was at their best time loyal to a different image of perfection.

Such violent shifting and molding of parts of the body are overcome only with great sacrifices of comfort, and quite often at the expense of health. On the other hand, it would be incomprehensible why human beings should rise to such power of endurance were they not compensated by the experience of a sensation which more than repays for physical inconvenience. This sensation is one of exaltation, of increased personal power over other beings. The esthetic experience of dressing becomes identified with a psychical satisfaction of the highest order. Said Herbert Spencer, "The consciousness of being perfectly dressed may bestow a peace such as religion cannot give."



*Does the pipe fit the face?*

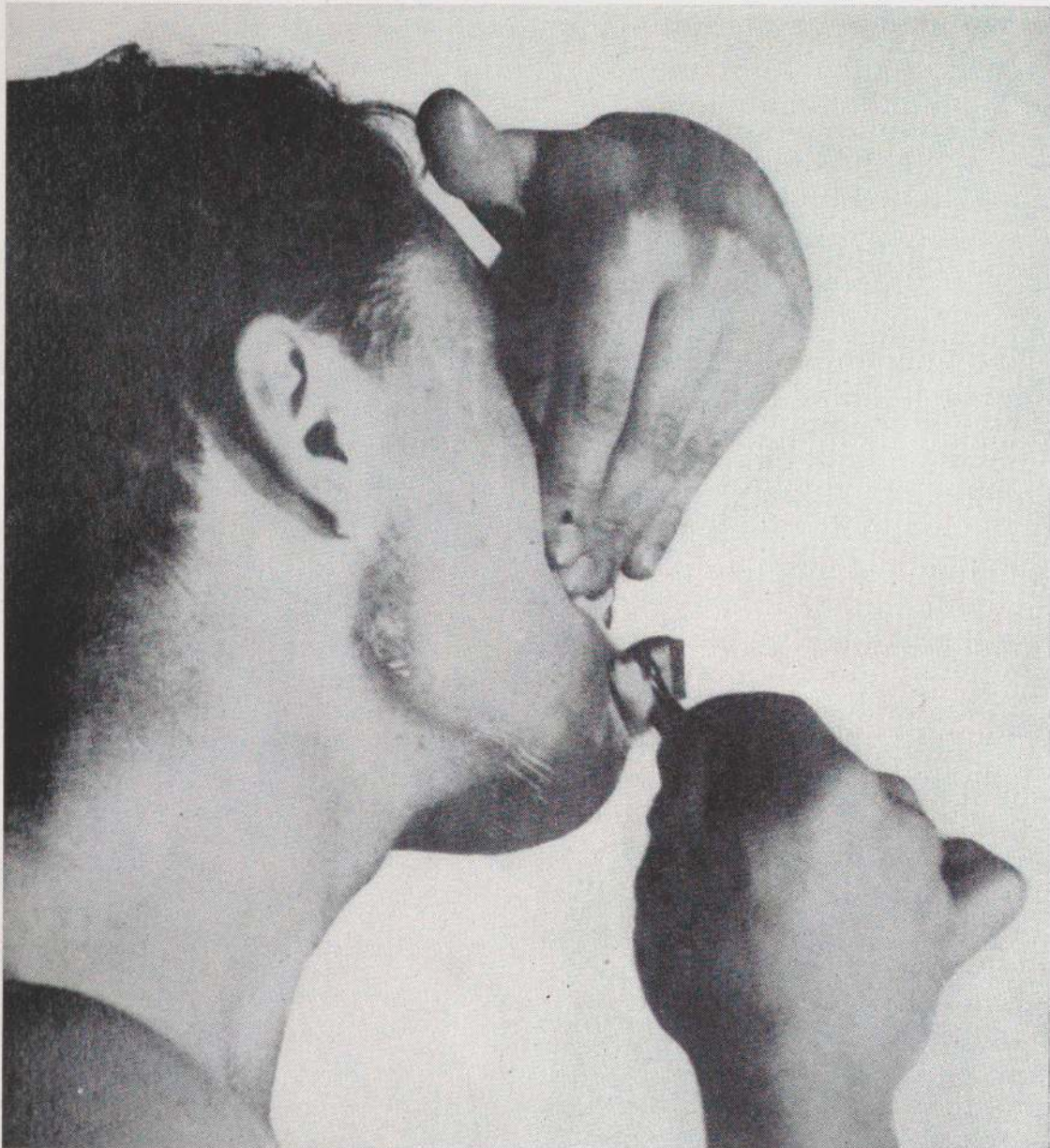


*From LeBrun, A series of lithographic drawings illustrative of the relation between the human physiognomy and that of the brute creation.*

Unlike animal, man lacks natural decoration. Though he possesses a more outspoken sense of vanity than most beasts, his only way of cultivating that feeling is by making up for what nature withheld to him. Man does not enjoy such attracting male prerogatives as butterfly wings or antlers. Indeed he renounced long ago what was meant to be a crowning ornament of his personality—the abundance of his hair.

This hair grows on his skull and chest in tufts and ringlets, and not only was the cultivation and embellishment of that growth at all times considered an agreeable duty, but its very existence was looked upon as a symbol of man's





Schaeffer

Since time immemorial man's facial hair has signified virility and dignity. The likenesses of God Father, Christ or the prophets, are unthinkable without beard. Modern man, in his daily performance of removing facial hair, has adopted a middle course between patriarch and convict.





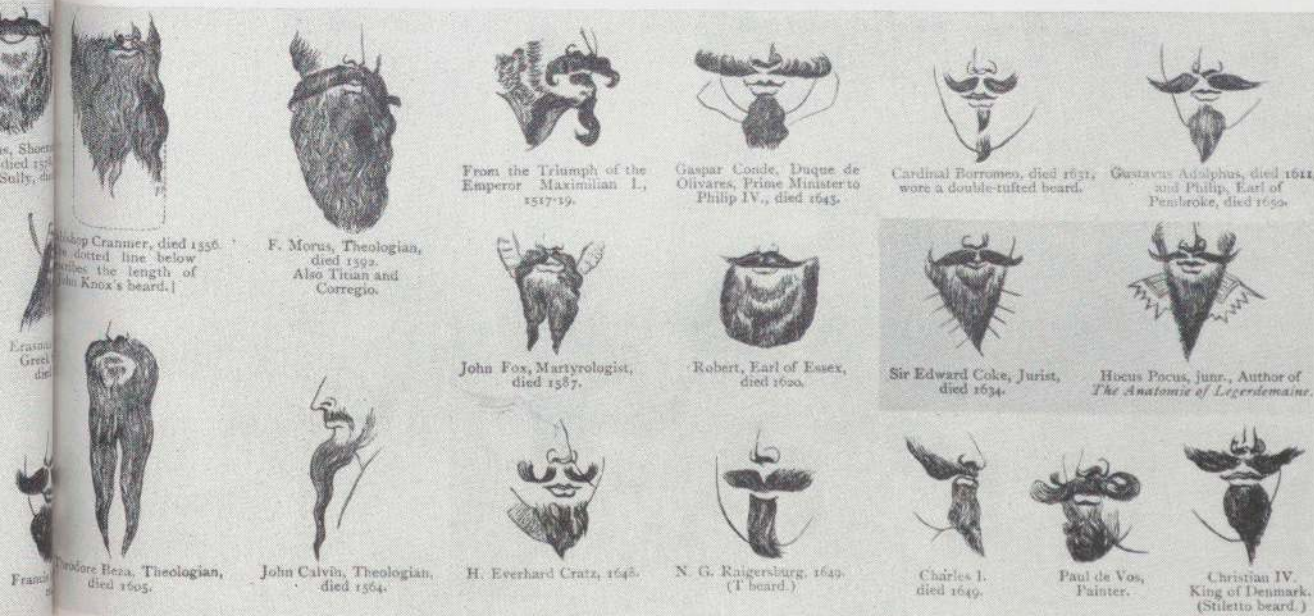
strength. Three hundred years ago, a writer discoursed on this topic: "That haire should be a most abject excrement, an unprofitable burden, and a most unnecessary and uncomely covering, and that Nature did never intend that excrement for an ornament, is a peece of ignorance or rather malicious impiety against Nature."<sup>53</sup> Men competed unashamedly with women in that field. The clipping of men's hair, as documented in the tonsorial cut or in daily shaving, was definitely regarded as a renunciation of manliness. Our peculiar brand of puritanism has defamed nature's gift, and has invented ingenious machinery to wipe it out. The result of so much abnegation is the billiard ball-smooth look with the blueish tinge. Very rarely does the eradication of man's facial hair result in an improvement of his features. A finely modeled head is exceptional; its handsomeness is too often effeminate. The preference of both sexes for the suppression of man's hair is, however, only a temporary vogue.

Of course, the motivation advanced for shaving is its hygienic advantages. The man who lets his beardhair grow to the design of the Lord, invites suspicion of being uncivilized. To be precise, also pate-hair is unhygienic—if it is left untidy. The Prussian with his regulation haircut that leaves but a slight blush of a moustache on his forehead, is just one step ahead of the Anglo-Saxon—he is more consequent, more aseptic and not less proud of his renunciation of hairiness.

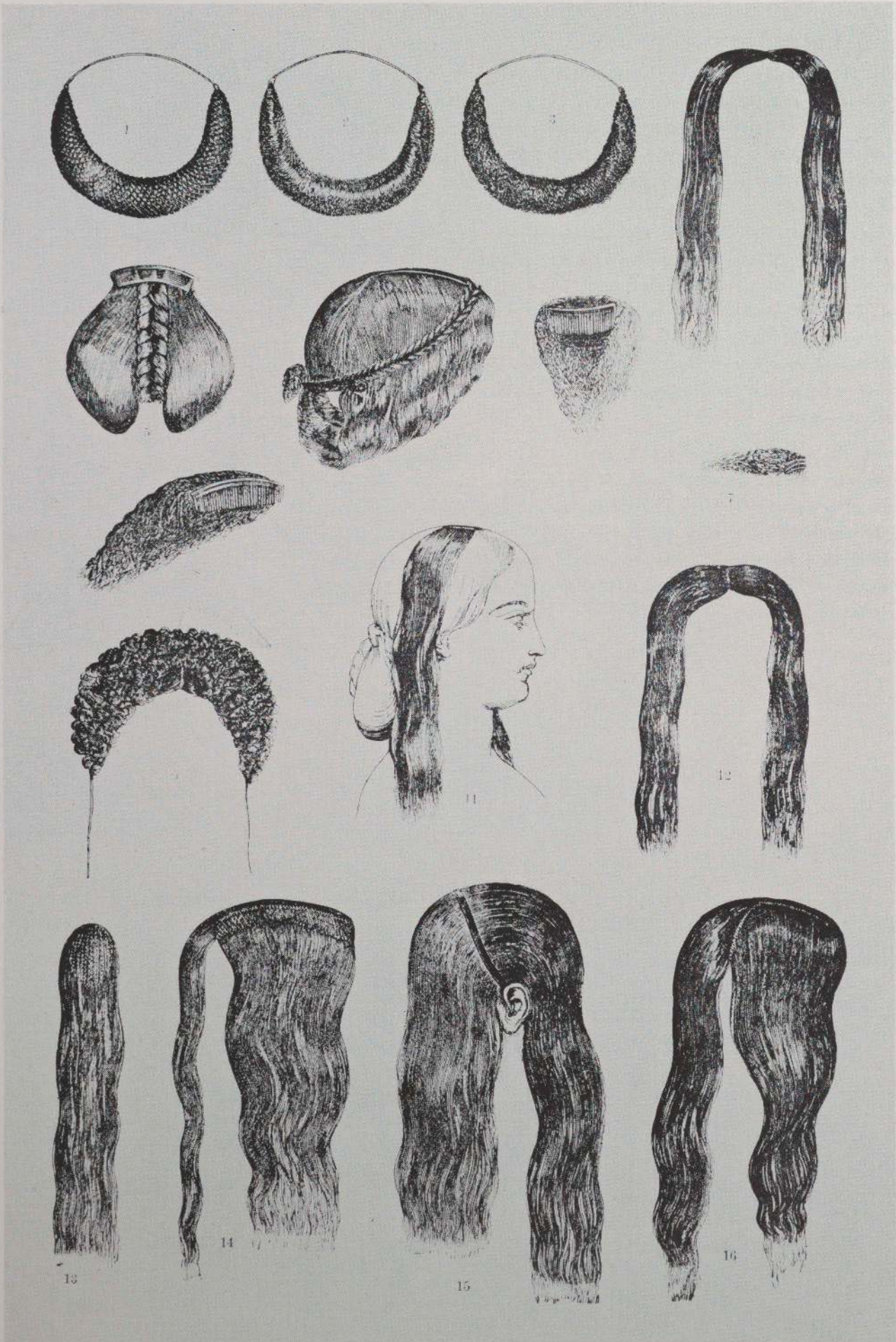


*Tonsorial cuts from Bulwer's Anthropometamorphosis, 1650.*

*From the English Illustrated Magazine, 1892.*









# Star Hair Supporter

(PATENTED AUG. 3, 1909.)

THE MOST MODERN AND USEFUL DEVICE EVER INVENTED.

Does not close the air cells by lying close to the head. Ventilates, cools and prevents headache. Acts as a firm foundation for the hat. Adjusts easily to any style of hair dressing. Lends youth to the appearance. Women with thin hair will find its effect wonderful. Excellent for automobilists.



COPYRIGHT 1910 BY THE STAR HAIR SUPPORTER CO.



No. 1

For women with thick hair, \$2.00 per doz., assorted colors, 1 doz. in a box.

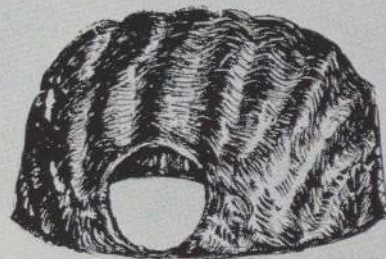


No. 2

For women with thin hair, \$18.00 per doz., assorted colors in a box.

Latest Style of Hairdressing with Star Hair Supporter.

Above and at right: Advertisements from Dry Goods Economist, 1909.



COMPLETE TURBAN

Illustrates the turban complete, showing the opening through which the hair is drawn.



Shows the construction of the turban frame, and a net of drawing hair through the opening. The wire is covered with silk thread, which prevents rusting and protects the wearer's hair.

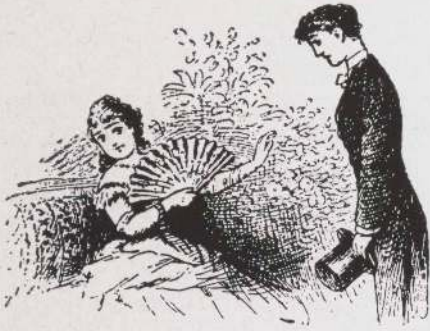


A beautiful and artistic use of the Sanitary Ideal Turban. It may be employed in many other styles equally new and effective.

On facing page: "Designs for false hair."

From Leslie's Gazette of Fashion, 1863.





From an advertisement, 1886.

Only two generations ago, the sad young man whose upper lip would not burst into bristles at the time when nature should distinguish him as a full-fledged male, was the stock in trade of the cartoonist. During the last war we witnessed the angry rebuke of a popular war cartoonist by an army commander for his persisting portrayal of fighting soldiers as bearded creatures. The feasibility of shaving and the hygienic question were not at issue; objection was made on the ground that a bearded soldier is regarded as undignified by his superiors. Hair-splitting does not come to a stop at the battle field. It is obvious that the lack of dignity must be compensated in other ways. Here enters the ornament.

Alas, we do not think any more of adorning our heads with a wreath of flowers. Women's heads are frequently garnished with the artificial kind. They are traditionally arranged on a platter which by common consent is spoken of as a woman's hat. Even though it sometimes looks like a functional piece of dress, the hat is a ceremonial instrument of the highest order. The protection afforded by present head coverings is negligible—excepting the sun- and rain-hat and various helmets of occupational necessity. Woman's hat is a collision of several trains of thought: it is armor and offensive weapon in one, it is an elixir for the mind, a psychological bulwark against the bitterness of life.

It will be argued that occasionally women's hats have been simple and sound, nothing but unadulterated shells for the skull. The *cloche* of the twenties which enjoyed a puzzling popularity, would fall into this category. But costume can be objectively evaluated only against its background. Taken from its context, it becomes the plaything that suffers so much abuse at the hands of present-day fashion designers. It is opportune to recall that the vogue for elephantine hats coincided with the advent of motorized carriages which afforded no cover whatsoever against wind, rain and the dust of primitive roads. Yet the enthusiasm for the automobile did not abate the predilection for the most unmanageable head coverings. A generation later, when the refinement of the motorcar had attained the character of the boudoir, and the most delicate of capital burden could have been taken care of, headgear had shrunk to the plainness of potato peels.

On a male skull, flower or fruit trimmings would be considered an atavism; a distinct mythological flavor with a strong after-taste of sin seems to cling to all fresh botanical specimens. Not that a delicate flower should be entirely denied to man in his happier moments. However, social code puts such heathen ornament in its proper place: the slit in the outer garment, poorly embroidered with ordinary stitches—the button hole which never lives up to its expectations, but sometimes doubles for the most wretched flower vase ever invented.

The voluptuous picture of a bunch of grapes dangling over the ear of an exhilarated businessman will be out of place for a considerable number of years to come. Modern man unconsciously expresses his distrust of nature by keeping it





*Brahmin with typical hair-do and beard. East Turkestan. About seventh century A.D.*

*From Le Coq, Die buddhistische Spätantike Mittelasiens.*





*English woman in winter costume.*

*From Hollar, Ornatus Muliebris Anglicanus, 1640.*

*"Be glad you wear glasses . . ." Advertisement, 1944.  
Courtesy Harlequin Corporation.*

*Bottom of facing page: English woman, 1644, and  
French woman in motoring attire, 1903.*

BE GLAD YOU WEAR GLASSES...

The lines of HARLEQUINS have been thoughtfully planned to flatter the contour of a woman's face.

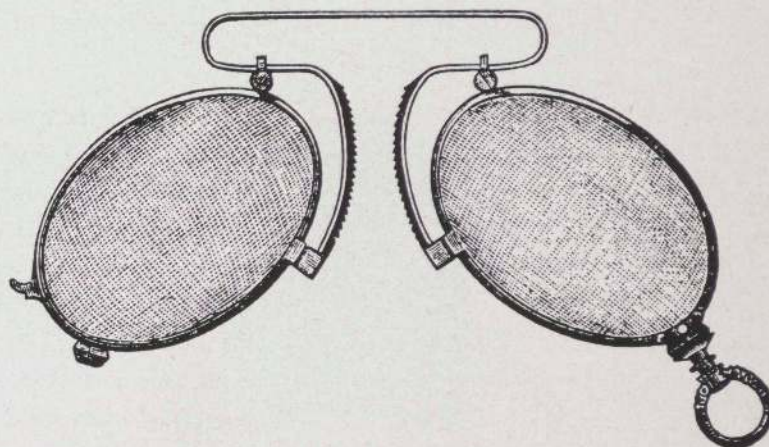
WEAR **harlequins**

Genuine HARLEQUINS bear this logo. Send for our charming new booklet. B  
On sale at leading opticians.

HARLEQUIN CORP. • 512 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.



*A generation ago, eye-glasses drooped, expressing dignity. Today, they are slanted upward. Both forms possess a mask-like quality.*



at a safe distance. His need for embellishment has drawn him towards ornaments which fit his moods and his exaltations in a more precise way. His favorite choice are articles which focus attention on his eyes and mouth.

That fascinating contrivance, the eye frame or eye glass, originally a crutch for the weak eye, has today become a wondrous mask. The glow of golden rims adds a visionary quality to the sleepest eyes, and the shortest eyesight seems to gain a power of deepest penetration from the halo of a pair of spectacles. The human object so stared at, is often unable to pierce the reflection of the glasses and tries in vain to read the face of his masked adversary. He might also be put to permanent uneasiness by the frozen grimace accomplished with the help of clownishly slanted goggles.

The suggestive qualities of glasses and goggles have been heavily exploited. Dark eye-glasses are often worn to hide one's identity. For the love of framing eyes, glasses have been adopted by people with perfectly normal eyesight. On the other hand, persons with only one eye impaired and refusing to bespectacle the good eye also, experience the wrath of popular sentiment which sees in the mono-glass or monocle the embodiment of evil, in fact, the modern equivalent of the evil-eye.





Quite unlike the utilitarian eye-glass, the walking stick—not to be confounded with the auxiliary third leg of the aged pedestrian—is an ornament of unadulterated pureness. The cane, it has been found, is the perfect aid for destitute hands. The notion that hands are intended for work only seems to be absurdly narrow; moreover, as pure work tools hands might some day become as obsolete as our present-day feet. The shattering blow of an ax or the delicate touch of the pianist can already be performed by mechanical contrivances. Slowly, we are reducing the hand, a most sensitive organ, to a lower step of evolution, the claw.

All great cultures esteemed the hands as being highly expressive. The silent but fluent language of an Indian dancer's hand is an artful achievement. The great gesture of the classic orator and the inexhaustible resources in gesticulation which are at the command of Southern peoples are always held inseparable from speech. In modern life, hands have become stunted. Polished and painted, bleached and creamed, they are as eloquent as oysters. Once in a while hands waver, accompanying nervously a phrase, to seek cover quickly



*African warriors with painted monocle.  
Courtesy Museum of Natural History, New York.*





*Masked Englishwomen of the sixteen forties.  
From Bulwer, Anthropometamorphosis, 1650.*

*Eyeglasses for evening wear, 1946.  
Courtesy Clairmont and Nichols Co.*



*Woman from Muscat with eye frame.  
From Buschan, Sitten der Völker.*





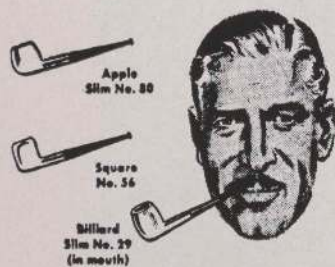
in the pigeonholes of our clothes. As the handbag is barred to men as a feminine article, the walking stick was invented so that the unhappy hands of the male could cling to an ornament. Modern means of transportation have hit hard the dignity of the stick; it is not in favor any more. But the cane may come back any day—as did another instrument, the pipe.

Originally a container for burning tobacco to be held by the teeth, nowadays the pipe is mainly a fashionable male ornament which symbolizes meditative reflection, mature consideration and general superiority. Deliberately slow gesturing and a more accentuated though less intelligible speech result from wearing a pipe. Both characteristics help to intensify the impression of masculine dignity. The pipe, this semi-functional head-ornament with its simple but nonetheless unpredictable mechanism, has only lately gained recognition as such. Now, men give as much attention to its shape and to its fitness of matching their facial features as do women hunting for the right tinge of lip-stick.

Naturally, the first factor in buying a pipe is a cool, sweet smoke. Lord Davenport Pipes smoke like a dream because the world's costliest and choicest imported briars are combined with the most patient craftsmanship. And pipes like that are rarities today! But there's another element in pipe smoking—the

*fashion* element. Does the pipe fit the face? Does it add character? Lord Davenport injects this all-important feature with a "pipe to fit every type of face". So check the five basic male types and get the pipe that best fits *your* Dad. He couldn't want a more fitting gift! And do it *soon*, because next Sunday is Father's Day!

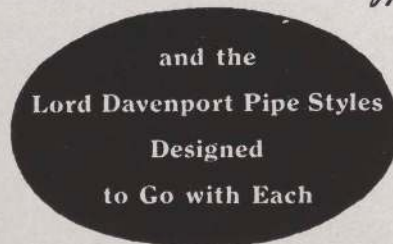
## The Five Basic Male Types



LONG, THIN FACE



AVERAGE, MEDIUM OVAL FACE



EXTRA, HEAVY-SET FACE



MEDIUM, THIN FACE



MEDIUM, HEAVY-SET FACE

"Does the pipe fit the face?" Newspaper advertisement, 1944.  
Courtesy Lord Davenport Pipes, Ltd.



A  
DISCOVRSE  
Against Painting and  
Tincturing of WOMEN.

Wherein the abominable finnes of } Murder and Poysoning, } are set forth  
Pride and Ambition, } & discovered.  
Adultery and Witchcraft, }



Whereunto is added the Picture of a Picture, or,  
The Character of a Painted Woman.

Printed at London for Edward Mearns. 1646.

Body painting, which is believed to be the archtype of decoration and to have preceded ornament, is carried on by people of the lowest as well as of the highest civilizatory levels. Skin, pate- and body-hair, finger- and toe-nails, gums and teeth, are the field for the artist's skill. The occasion of his activity may be mourning, rejoicing, simulacre, or plain vanity. Less durable than tattoo, paint has to be perpetually renewed; many thousand years of body painting have taxed the ingenuity of man, but have not improved painting technique in any noticeable way. Application and quality of the paint are still primitive. We ourselves add inconvenience through our stubborn refusal to make a clean separation between clothing and painting. Esthetically and practically, the savage is therefore superior to us since he uses his naked body much in the way as the artist who creates polychrome sculpture. White man is content to patch up with color those few spots which he has not already covered with cloth or leather. Crude as these color applications are, they come off easily and are smeared over wearing apparel, upholstery, eating utensils and, occasionally, over fellow creatures. Incidentally, the modern male is not yet allowed to use paint directly; he has to take recourse to the time-robbing process of sun- and lamp-tanning.

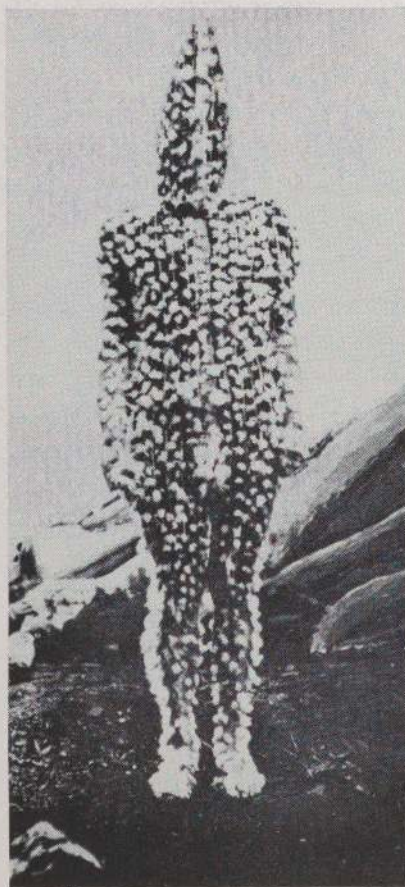
Primitive body painting where it is unimpeded by vestigial clothing, is truly artistic and inventive. The difference between unrestricted body painting of uncivilized peoples and our own timid ventures is similar to the difference between a decorated Russian Easter egg and a plain egg. Bleaching and tanning belong rightly to skin coloration proper. In our time, fashion writers set up alternating ideals of fair and dark skin. However, the designation "skin" does not encompass the sum of body surface but only those



parts that are exposed according to the current concept of modesty. This peculiarity results in accidental body decoration of much bolder character than that conventionally achieved by cosmetics. The prescribed covering of the intimate parts at sun and sea-bathing brings forth the strongest contrasts in skin coloration, an effect that is often as weird as it is obscene.

Due to fashions of modesty and clothing, our skin painting is zoned,—excepting the facial part, the coloration of which is determined not by anatomical considerations but by the field of vision afforded by the mirror. The facilities of dressing tables and bathroom mirrors, as they are today, are a trifle insufficient; the painting female generally contents herself with laying out the pigment solely on the area between the roots of her hair and the tip of her chin. The ancient technique of cheek-rouging having gone out of fashion for the time being, all painting is mono-chrome. Contrasting color is restricted to the eye-sockets; mouth paint is often applied regardless of the contour of lips or their actual color. Mouth painting of the last decade is indeed the only instance which ranks *au pair* with primitives.

The only other cutaneous zones invaded by paint are the female legs and that part of the feet which is not encased in shoes. Interestingly enough, this is one modern example of painting that simulates clothing apparel. The *trompe-l'oeuil* is crude, but the prospect of better and gayer imitations should



*Although they are living in a most severe climate, Patagonians have not developed protective clothing. The two aborigines shown are, however, satisfactorily attired from their own sartorial point of view.*

*From Gusinde, Feuerland Indianer.*





*Head from a buddhistic sculpture.  
Sixth century A.D. East Turkestan.*

*From Le Coq, Die buddhistische  
Spätantike Mittelasiens.*

not be overlooked. The painted stocking is not a war-measure, as has been maintained erroneously; it was introduced—unsuccessfully—about ten years ago, long before stockings became scarce. The earliest case recorded is the example of a young lady from Arkansas who “desirous of making a brilliant figure at a ball, called a paint brush and a quantity of red and white paint to her aid, and produced on those present at the ball the impression that she was wearing a beautiful and costly pair of striped stockings.” It happened in 1879, and was duly reported by the New York Times.

Another example of the use of paint in lieu of clothing, is that of natives who have taken to modern underclothing in effigy. Many authors have acknowledged the substitution of painting and tattooing as legitimate from the point of view of corporeal modesty. The naked savage who is painted with an overall pattern looks to us more completely dressed than a person in scanty clothing. With tattooing this impression is still stronger; the human skin seems to be miraculously transformed into dry goods.

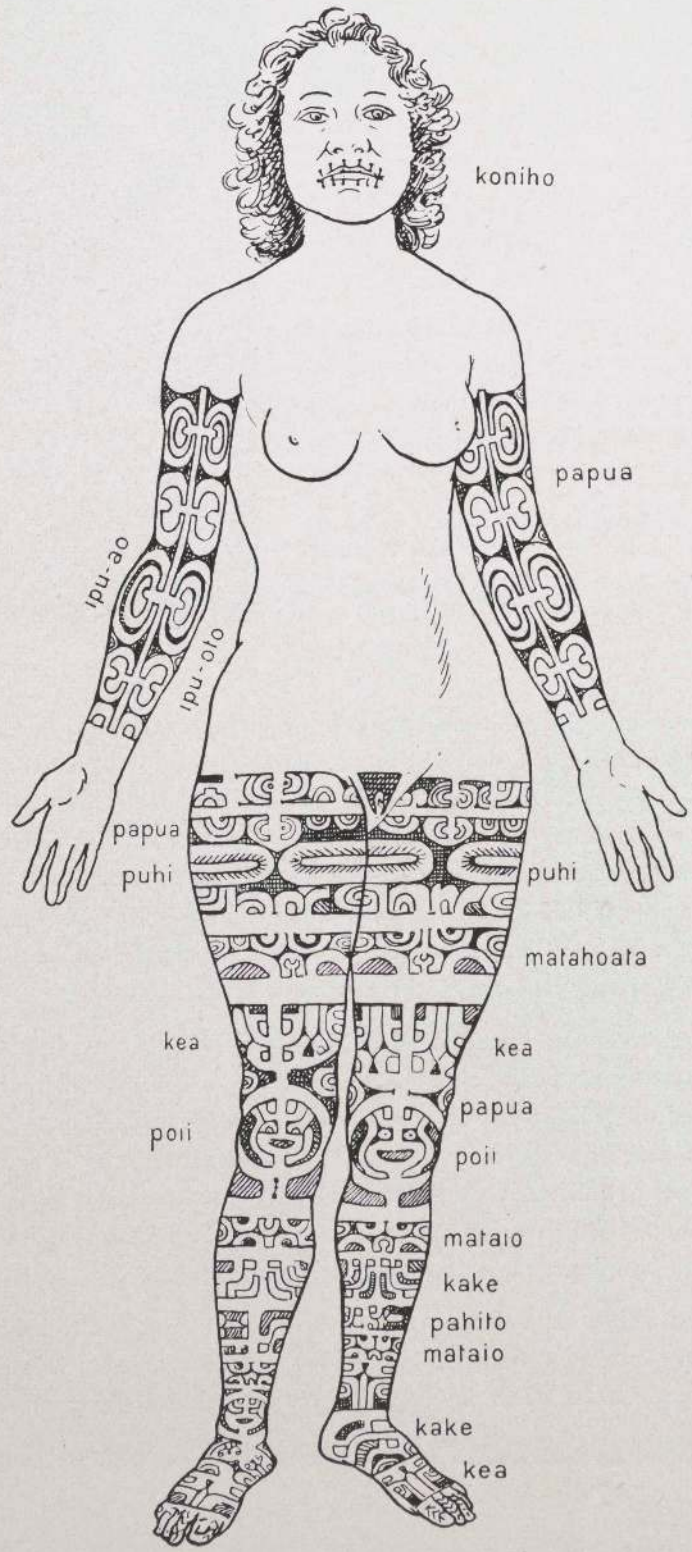
Lately, we have been exposed so much to face painting that, due to habit, a face that lacks “make-up” acquires in our eyes a stark nakedness; it is as if we would surprise ourselves in an indiscreet act when looking at some



woman's unpainted features. If the present trend of baring the skin persists, we may expect a complete exposure of the female torso. This would probably stir up as little agitation as did the baring of the navel, if it were brought about by a transitional period of skin painting or tanning.

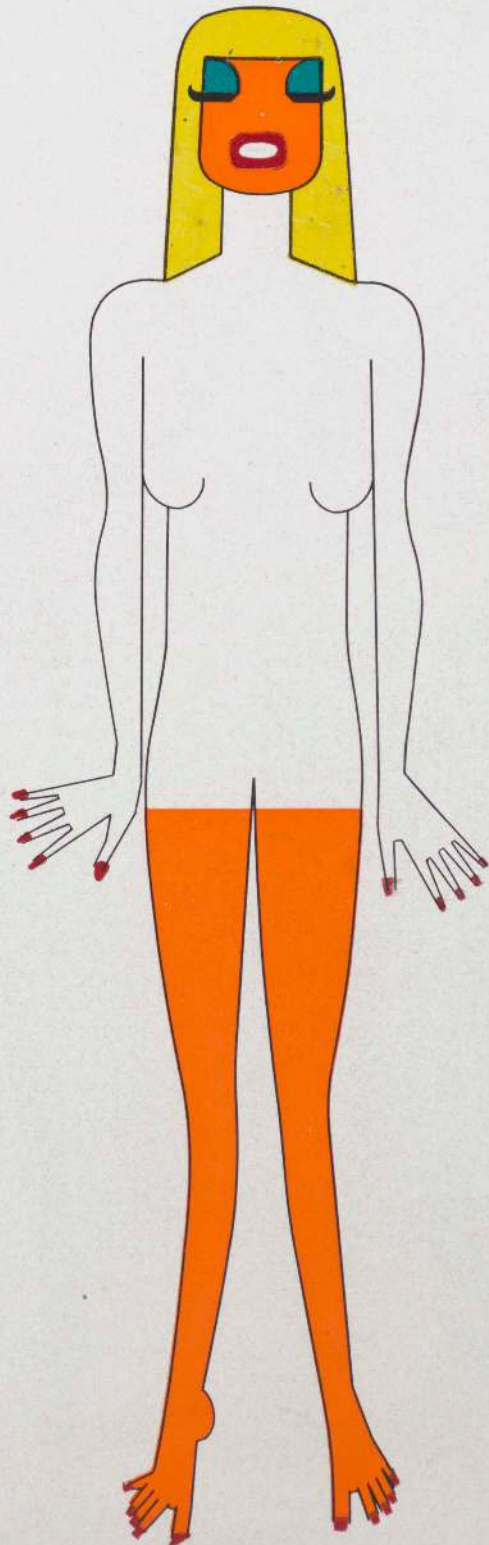
Modern lip- and nail-paint started as imitation and intensification of natural hues; the color range of the painted mouth runs now from violet to orange,

*This Marquesan tattoo is zoned, similar to painting on the white female.*  
 From Steinen, Die Marquesaner.





that of nails is unlimited with red as dominating color. The quantity of paint for the female body is steadily increasing. Altogether it is applied in broad surfaces with hardly any shading, so that we should speak of coating or daubing rather than painting. The more subtle devices that were employed in antiquity, such as rouging of the lobules and knee-caps, the tips of the breasts and elbows, have sunk into oblivion.



*Painting is not restricted to primitives. Modern woman uses color on her body quite freely—blue or yellow for her hair; green for eye-lids; orange or purple for lips; red for nails. Invasion of the torso by color has started with painting neck, shoulders and abdomen.*



*Painted apparel, inspired by British officers' shorts. Among us skin painting is only at the beginning and the possibility of its competition with clothing should not be underestimated.*

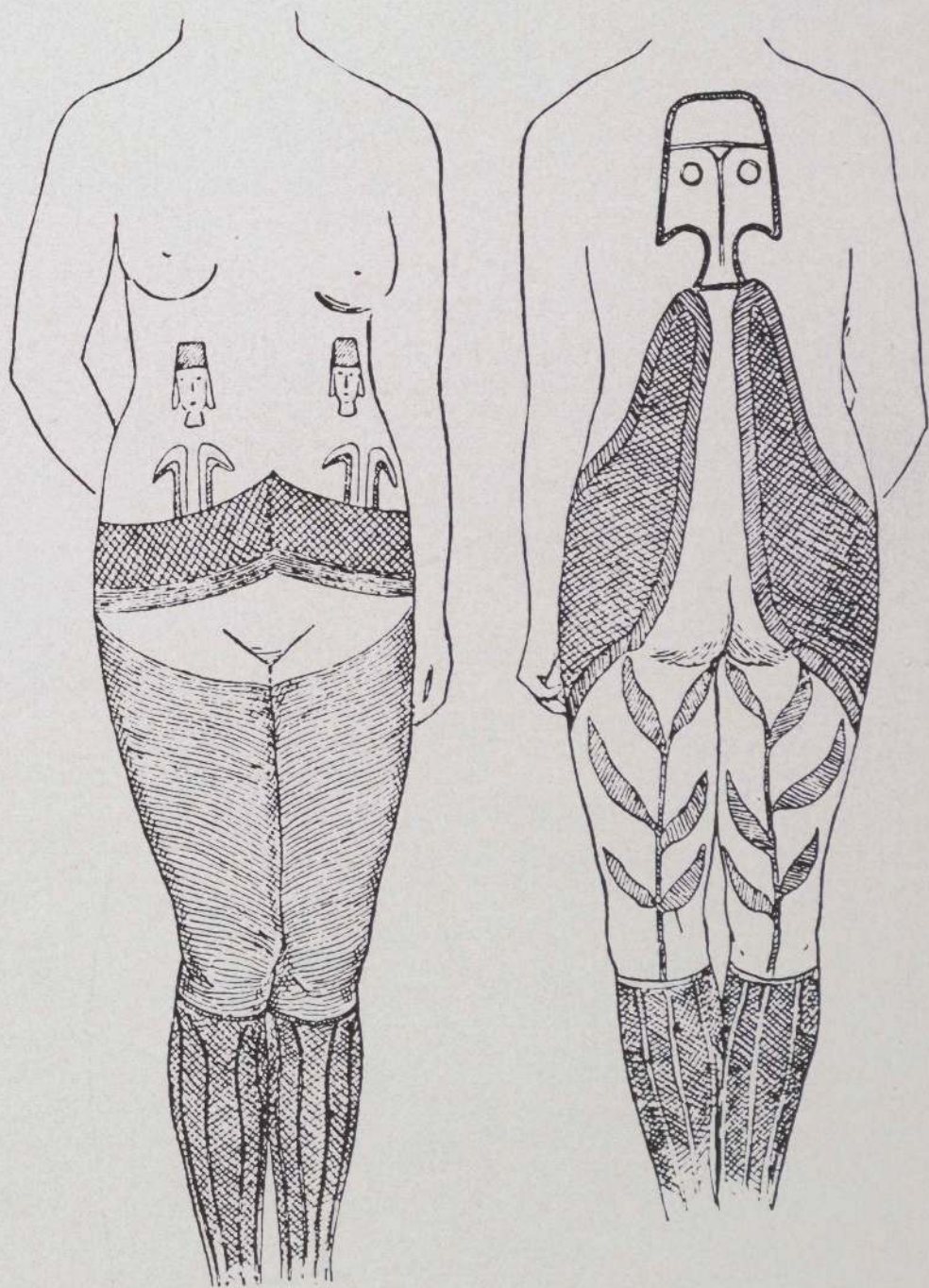






*On facing page: Marquesan tattoo.*

*From Langsdorff, Voyages and Travels, 1803-1807.*



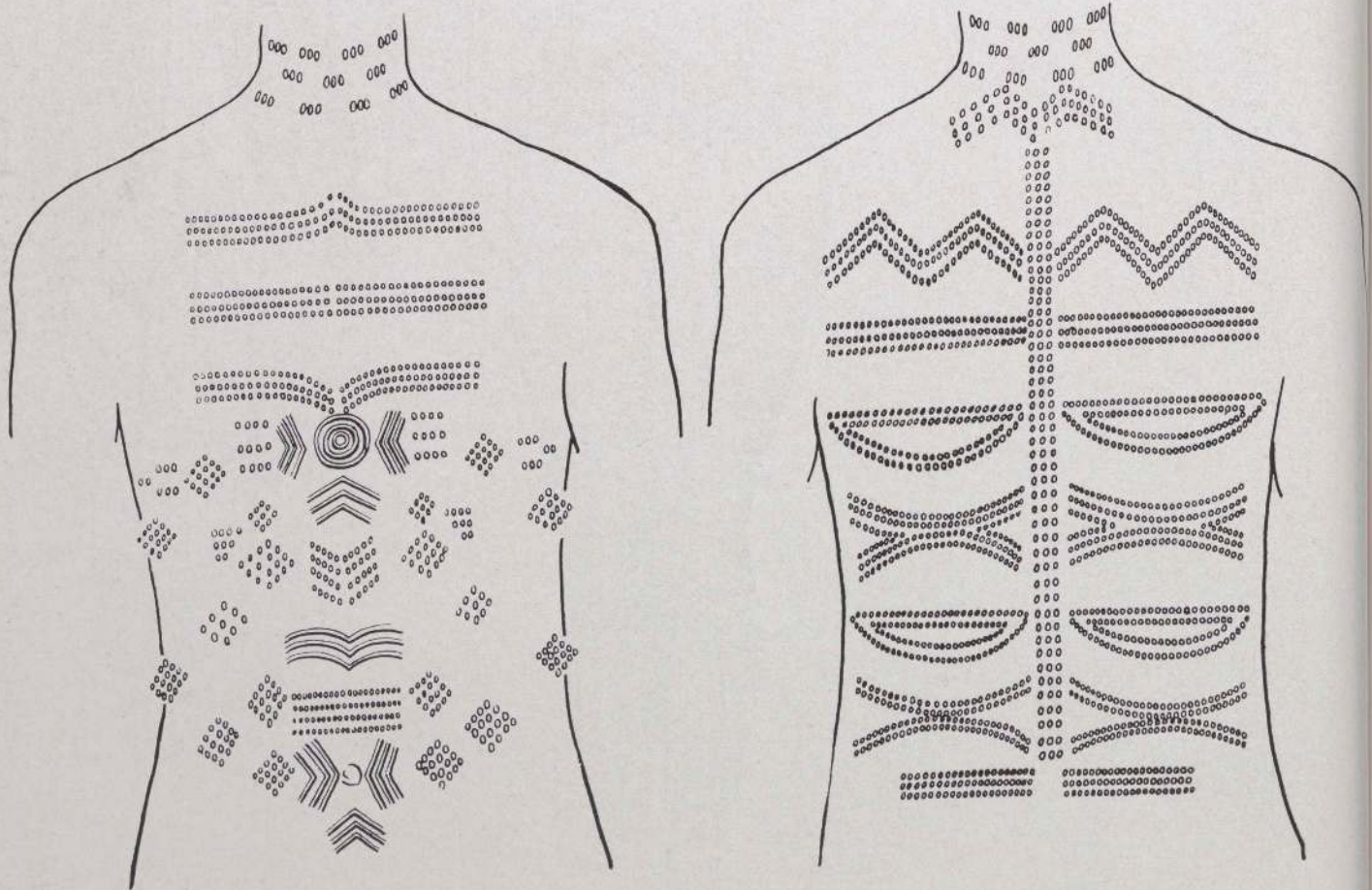
*Front and rear of tattooed woman, Easter Island.*

*From Abhandlungen und Berichte des Königlichen Zoologischen und Anthropologisch-Ethnographischen Museums zu Dresden, 1899.*



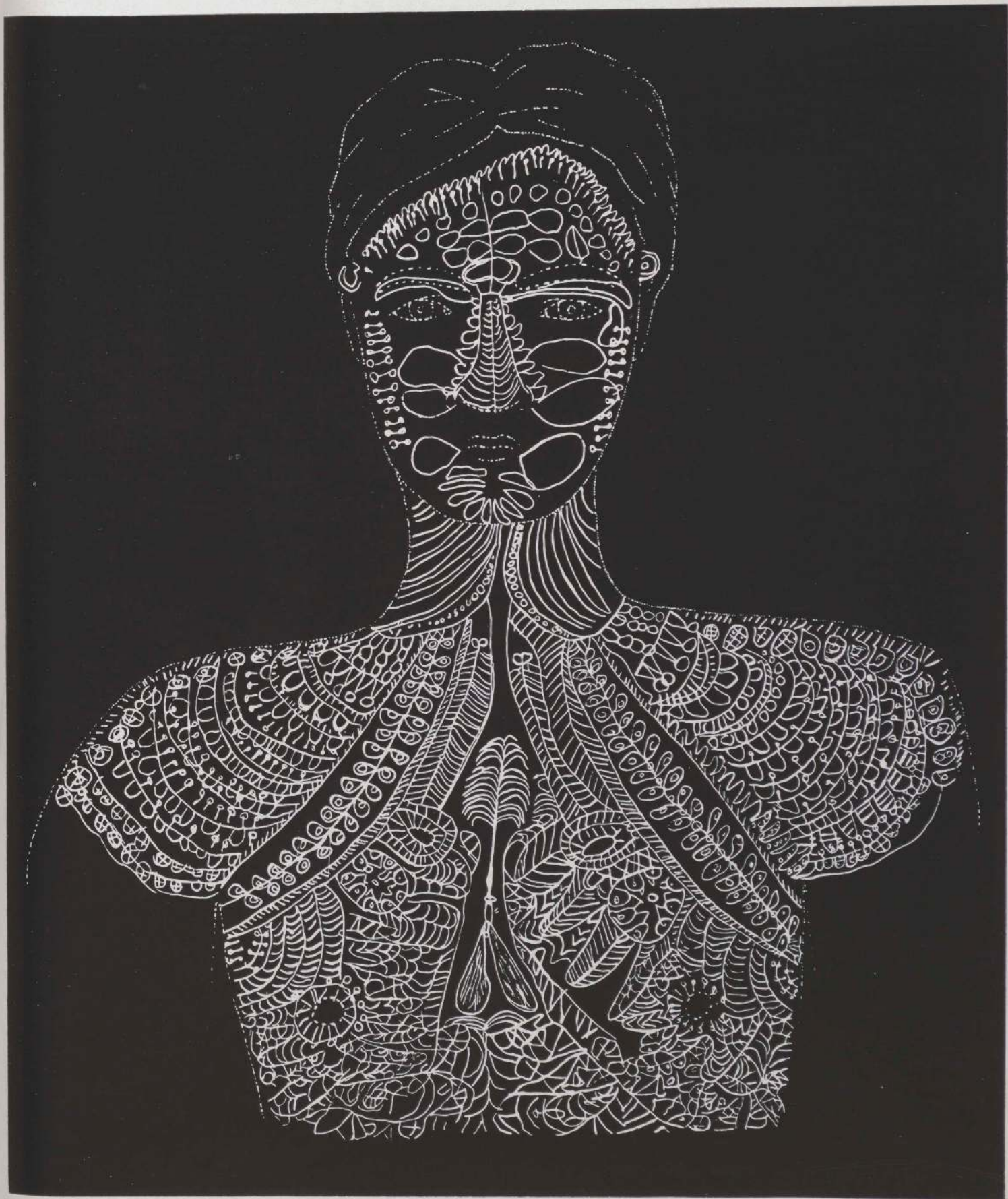
*Opposite page: Sketch for a tattoo design made by a native of  
Easter Island.*

*From Abhandlungen und Berichte des Königlichen Zoologischen  
und Anthropologisch-Ethnographischen Museums zu Dresden, 1899.*



*Front and back tattoo, Belgian Congo.  
From Musée du Congo Belge, Annales.*



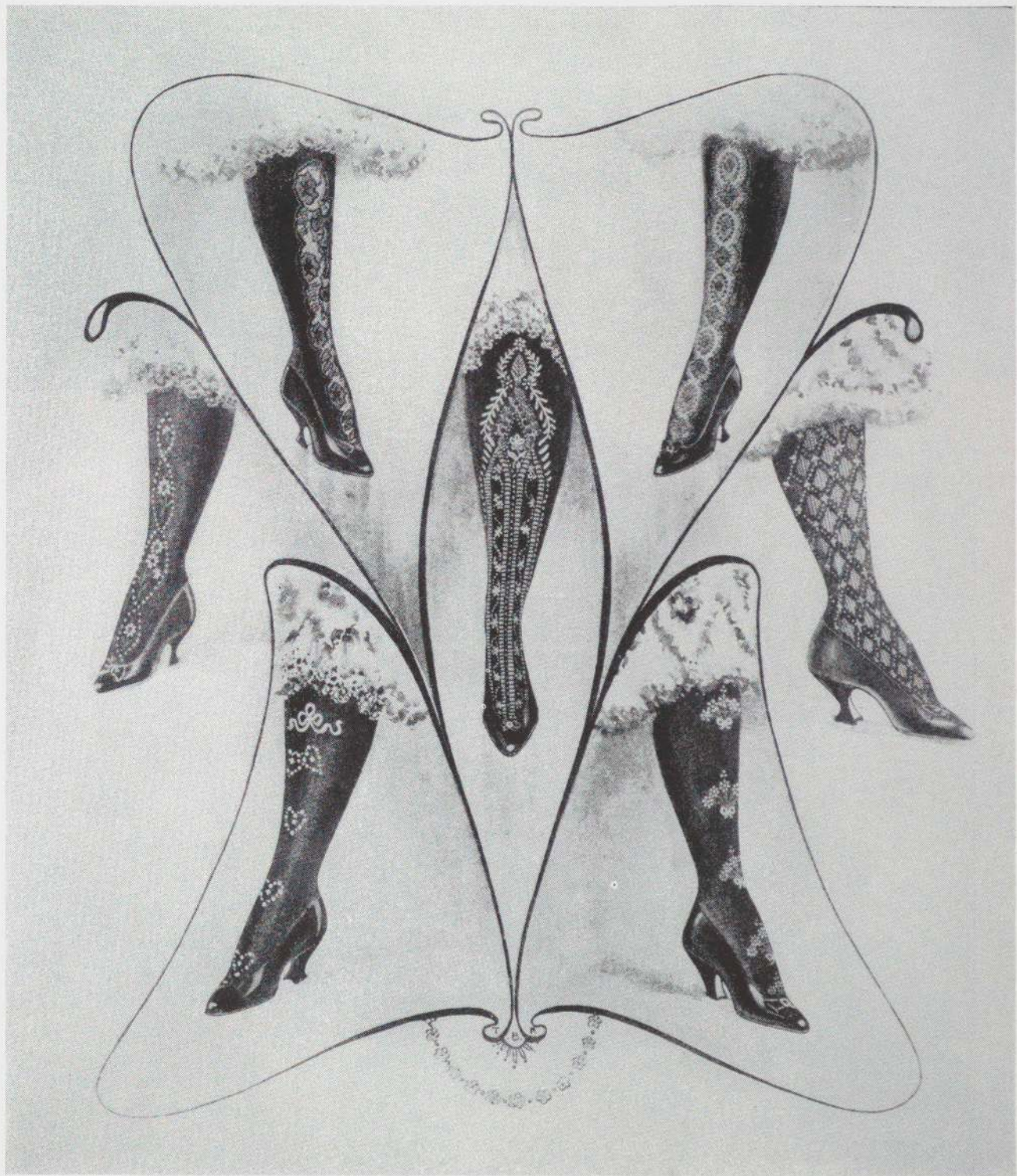






*Tattooed legs. Marquesan islands.  
From Steinen, Die Marquesaner und ihre Kunst.*





*Civilized people are anxious to avoid any permanent decoration;  
it would interfere with the rotation of fashions.*

*American stockings, 1902.*

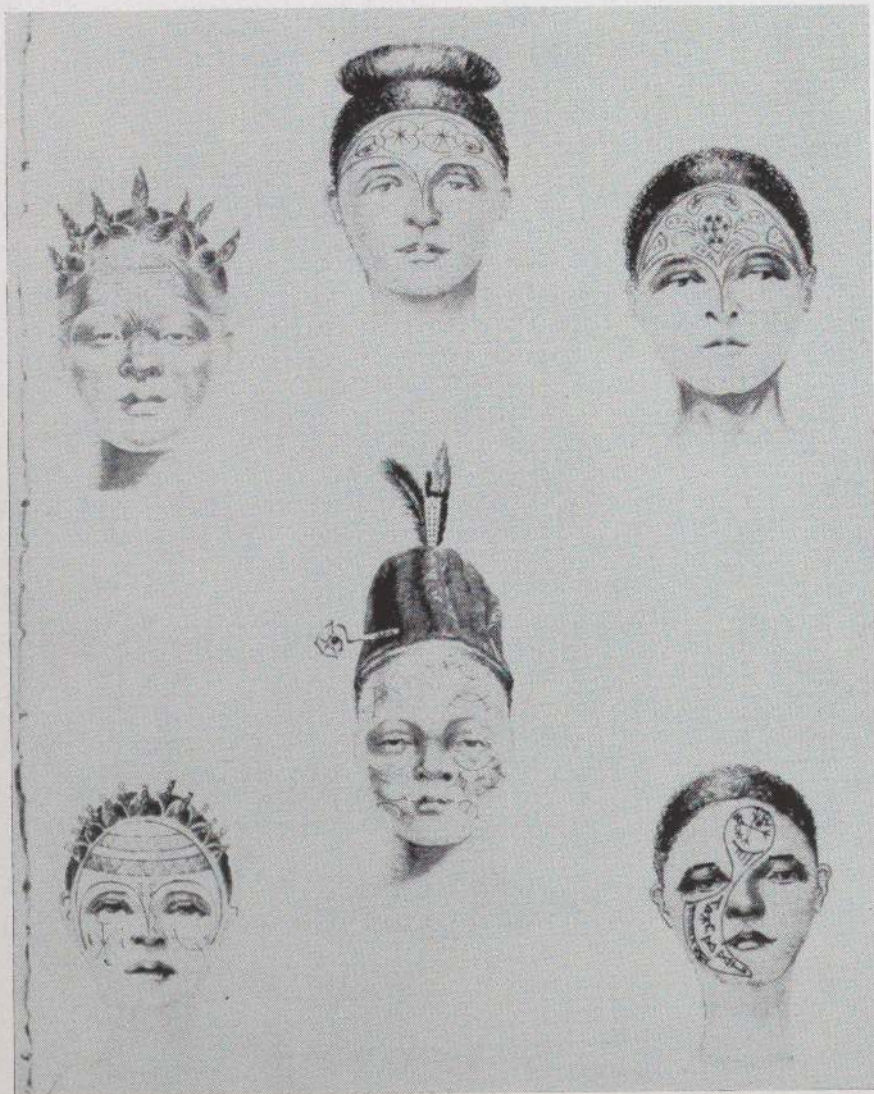


*At right: Scar tattoo.*

*From Hiler, From Nudity to Raiment.*

*Below: Advanced styles of face decoration on six Etoi (Nigeria) women. The sixth variation is remarkable for its asymmetric treatment and use of free shapes.*

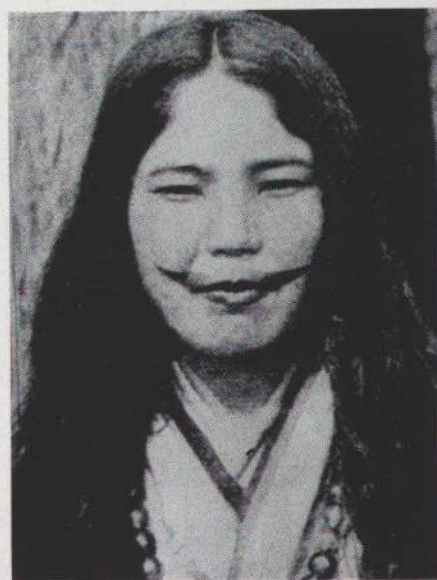
*From Talbot, In the Shadow of the Bush.*





Among the most ancient correctives of nature belong bleaching and dyeing of pate-hair. The peculiar erotic attraction of red- and blonde-heads led early to universal fetishism of fair hair. Sexual and racial superiority have been ascribed to it, though nothing concrete is known of the nature of that attraction. "It may be true," speculates Dunlap Knight, "that color has a direct value, that the masculine preference for red-haired women which is so frequent, and of which the Elizabethan erotic writings are so full, is not due solely to the association of the hair color with the ardent temperament which without doubt was a characteristic of the red-haired stocks; but it is in part due to the direct effect of the visual stimulation."<sup>54</sup>

In his dialogues on the perfect beauty of woman, Agnolo Firenzuolo argues that only blonde hair is beautiful. "E voi sapete che de' capegli il proprio o vero colore è esser biondi." It is recorded that at the time of Titian, only blonde women were seen in Venice.



*Above: Fashions in eyebrows.*

*From Bulwer, Anthropometamorphosis, 1650.*

*At top, right: Ainu woman with tattooed mustache.*

*From Dembo and Imbelloni, Deformaciones.*





Hair dyeing was widely practiced in antiquity, and many good documentations are found in antique sculpture. The original coloration of the hair has been preserved in polychrome statuary such as the Maidens at the Acropolis; in Pompeii, a red-haired Artemis was unearthed, and the Venus of the Medici was a blonde. During the Renaissance, dark-haired Italian women turned into fair ones. In Venice originated *l'arte biondeggiate*, the art of blonding.<sup>55</sup> On the narrow wooden platforms that can still be seen on Venetian roofs, fashionable women used to spend entire days in the pursuit of attractiveness, much as present-day women of means spend whole days in pursuit of beauty in the parlor of the hair-dresser.



*Venetian woman bleaching her hair.*

*From Vecellio, De gli abiti antichi, 1590.*



## *Clothes in our time*

"That men in a modern age will tolerate such clothing indicates, to say the least, an insensivity and a stupid fear of change that is alarming. Can a worthwhile new world come of such a herd of asses? It begins to seem doubtful."

(Baker Brownell, *Art in Action*.)

The clothes we wear today, are anachronistic, irrational and harmful. Moreover, they are expensive and undemocratic. In opposition to this stands the opinion of the people who make, sell, and buy clothes. They agree that the clothes of today are the best the world has seen so far; in fact, they consider them nothing short of impeccable. Their opinion is not novel, of course.

They have advanced the same or similar statements continuously. The fashions that used to endanger both the mother and the child in her womb were applauded by fashion writers and public alike. To judge from its popularity, the habit to throttle the neck of men and women with starched linen or metal collars cannot have been but physically and esthetically gratifying. And today, the older generation sees in its disjointed feet and egg-sized bunions nothing but a joyous tribute to the fashions of diabolical footwear. The trains trailing in the mud, the hoop- and hobble-skirts, the straight-jackets, the garters and suspenders, the cartwheel and stovepipe hats, the pumps and boots, all were or still are part of the finest attire brains could contrive.

When we turn the pages of out-dated popular or fashion magazines, we are surprised to find that people once bought electric corsets and electric shoe-soles, as eagerly as they bought appliances for growing hair on bald spots. Then as now, the businessman was not content to collect his profits. He yearned to be a benefactor, and practically convinced our grandmothers that without the proper contraptions, they would disintegrate. It would have been easy to disprove such fallacy with an array of anatomical, physiological and historical arguments. But the scientist who cannot compete with the grace and forcefulness of the businessman in the first place, hardly ever thought of applying ratiocination to dress at all.

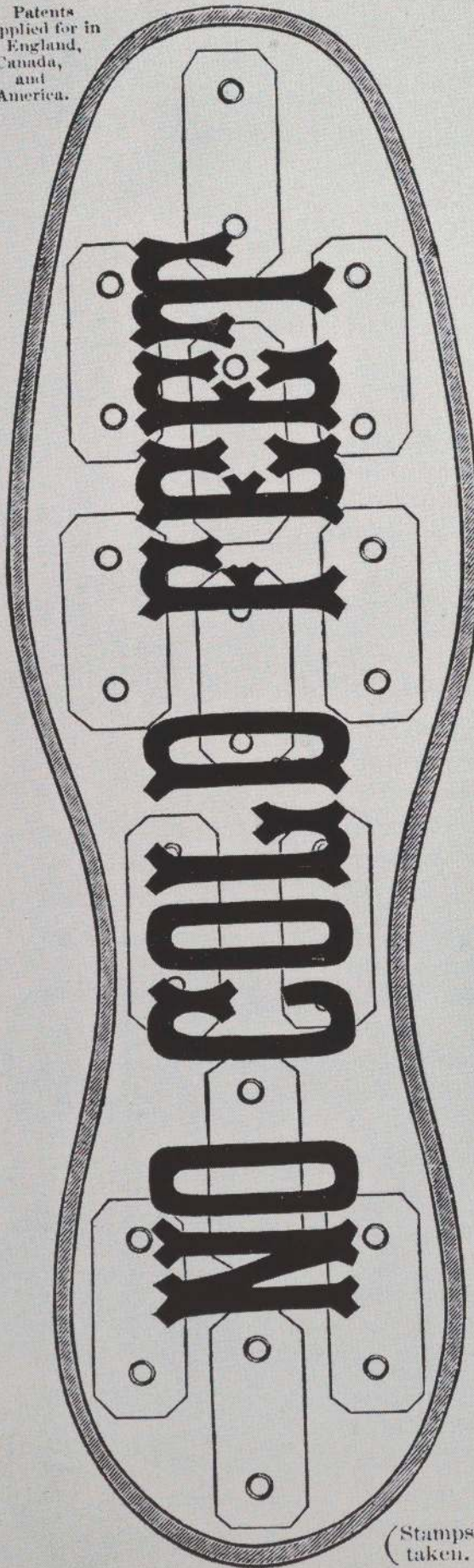


### **A Scientific Method of Growing Hair**

*From an advertisement.*



Patents  
 applied for in  
 England,  
 Canada,  
 and  
 America.



(Stamps  
 taken.)

# FERRIC ODYLINE, A NEW DISCOVERY.

The Highest form of Electricity.

**THOUSANDS OF PERSONS**  
 Are now writhing in Disease, all of whom date the  
 contraction of their different Maladies from  
 the catching of a cold from

**DAMP OR COLD FEET.**

"Keep the feet warm and the head cool" is an axiom  
 as old as the hills and yet is as true to-day as at any  
 period in the world's history.

**FERRIC ODYLINE INSOLES**

**WILL PREVENT OR CURE  
 NEARLY EVERY**

**FORM OF DISEASE,**

INCLUDING CONSUMPTION, LIVER AND KID-  
 NEY TROUBLES, CATARRH, RHEUMATISM,  
 GOUT, NERVOUS COMPLAINTS, PARALYSIS, &c.  
 Stand on ice all day, yet have **WARM FEET** by wearing

**Ferric Odyline Insoles.**

PRICE ONLY

**50 CTS. PER PAIR.**

Cold feet an impossibility, nearly every form of  
 disease permanently cured by **FERRIC ODYLINE**  
**GARMENTS.**

## FERRIC ODYLINE.

Mysterious law our world controls,  
 To man unknown, by all unseen,  
 But science circumscribed the poles,  
 And gave us Ferric Odyline.

The ills to which our flesh is heir  
 Will cease to scourge our human being,  
 For gaunt disease cannot be where  
 Is used the Ferric Odyline.

The deadly drugs of other days  
 Prescribed by honest men have been,  
 But now the folly of their way,  
 They see in Ferric Odyline.

Rheumatic pains endured for years,  
 A Chronic Cough or Hardened Spleen,  
 And Asthma always disappears  
 Beneath the Ferric Odyline.

Consumption's glassy eye no more  
 Shall lighten up the dying scene,  
 For all her dreaded powers are o'er  
 When faced with Ferric Odyline.

Neuralgic pains distract the sense,  
 And sleepless nights may intervene,  
 But Nature gives her recompense  
 In soothing Ferric Odyline.

When business cares o'ertax the brain,  
 And leave the body lank and lean,  
 Would you your nervous force regain,  
 Then wear the Ferric Odyline.

However cold the clime may be,  
 O'er marshes damp or mountains green,  
 Your feet from Chills are ever free  
 When soled with Ferric Odyline.

From youth's first dawn to hoary age  
 The fertile fields of life we glean,  
 And on the world's historic page  
 We'll fix the Ferric Odyline.

Sent postpaid on receipt of 50 cents by the Ferric  
 Odyline M'g Co., 842 Broadway, New York. To fam-  
 ilies, 6 pair for \$2 50. State size wanted and whether  
 for lady or gentleman. Agents wanted in every town.

**The price  
 will be re-  
 turned in  
 every case  
 where they  
 do not give  
 satisfaction.**

Use Dr. Scott's Electric Hair and Flesh Brushes, Price \$3 each.



At present it is the foot that has to be propped up if we want to postpone its breakdown. The "metatarsal arch" and its preservation are the nightmare of millions of shoe-buying people. Though the "metatarsal arch" is non-existent, it has helped to sell "supports" and "preservers" on a scale which is as grandiose as the credulity of the buying public.

Another reason for the continuance of charlatanism in the field of clothing is the singularly strong position of the manufacturer in a highly industrialized country. This is born out by the elasticity with which freedom of speech is defined in the world of thought on the one hand, and in the domain of commerce on the other. Political and ideological opinions may be assaulted freely; the statesman's ideas and actions are open to unrestrained criticism; the author, composer, or artist who presents his brainchild to the public has to expect and take abuse. Generally, this criticism is restricted to words, spoken or printed, which often enough are irrelevant to the merits of the work in question. But sometimes the sale of a book is forbidden, a play is closed, a mural is scraped off as a result of criticism. This happens notwithstanding any professed principles of spiritual freedom. Nor do such incidents arouse much comment; works of art and books are not essential to our civilization; besides, there are too many substitutes for them.

*Ventilated Corset Ankle Support.  
From Dry Goods Economist, 1909.*

*Facing page: At a time when the popular concept of electric energy was as vague as is the notion of atomic energy today, it was easy to induce people to buy electric apparel. Electric corsets and shoes were sold on the assumption that they cured or prevented disease. "Greater than Edison is Dr. Scott," wrote the Rev. Dr. Parker of the City Temple in the Christian Chronicle of October 1882, "and the crowning achievement of the age in the way of Electrical Invention is the Electric Hair Brush."*

*From Harper's Bazar, 1883.*

## 10,000,000 People

will see our advertisements in a short time

## FLESH BLOOD BONES

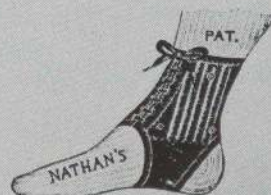
If your customer's foot is made of the same material as your own, fit him with Nathan's No Metal Flexible Cushioned Arch Support (Pat.). They are easy, require no breaking in, adjust themselves and will wear better than any metal support. But if his foot is like a hoof, shoe him with metal.



When you sell a customer a pair of our arch supports you can feel you have satisfied him and given him the greatest value for his money and in nine cases out of ten he will recommend a friend.

### REMEMBER

We are also manufacturers of the celebrated Pat. Ventilated Corset Ankle Support, also Style and Storm Men's and Women's Overgaiters that fit equally well with or without rubbers. Ask your jobber for them and write us for prices and particulars. We will furnish you with circulars.



**NATHAN NOVELTY  
MFG. CO.**

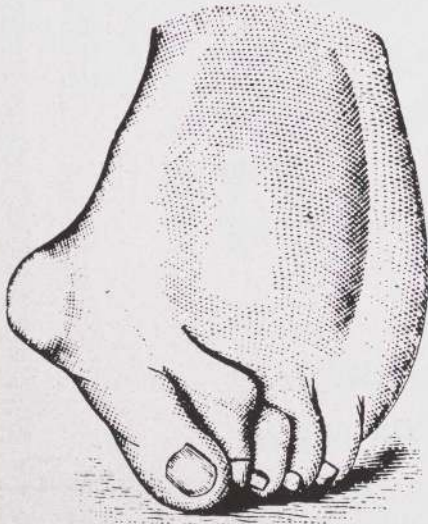
88 and 90 Reade Street,  
NEW YORK CITY

DEPT. 25



Unlike the products of the intellect, manufactured goods enjoy immunity from criticism. An impetuous word, an unfriendly adjective, are equally punishable as libel. To be sure, the law has limited, at least theoretically, the profits from dealing in food and shelter, and hygienic specifications for the merchandise have greatly helped to re-establish standards of decency. But, though nobody should or would go naked in the streets, clothing is apparently not yet rated a primary necessity of life.

Of course, there is plenty of cheap clothing available, and cheap it looks indeed. But does one have any luck in protesting against a cumbersome garment—or rather, has anybody ever raised his voice to vindicate his right for intelligent clothing? No, not since the time of dress reform when the cries of the malcontent were muffled by maliciousness and ridicule. There is no compulsion for buying clothes other than the current rules of dressing and modesty. Stores deal in specialties for the widest range of taste, bad and good. Nevertheless, it is an idle task to look for an adult's shoes that would accommodate an undeformed foot. But then, hardly anybody has ever seen an adult's perfect foot. This may seem a trifling matter in peaceful times when the individual is unquestioningly entitled to maltreat his feet the way he chooses. In the emergency of war, such private privilege is curtailed and stupidity becomes criminal. War correspondents told of the plight of British soldiers in the early stage of the Malayan campaign, who, deprived of motorized transportation, were unable to flee because their footwear had crippled them. And there were other tales of the fabulous ability of Japanese troops to climb trees and conquer obstacles, faculties which in all innocence were ascribed to their supposed ape-like nature rather than to strong and flexible feet. It is a fair speculation to think of such a soldier who, surviving the years of captivity with his memory intact, comes back to wring the neck of the shoe designer. And should the court absolve him of guilt, his example will open a new and more human era.



From Popular Science Monthly.

Obviously, our clothes belong to a past era—at the latest, to the nineteenth century. Whether they felt the pulse of that time, we don't have to speculate about because we cannot identify ourselves with snuffers, horse-drawn carriages and septic surgery. Clothes were then made by craftsmen and fitted individually. When the machine took over the task of cutting and sewing dresses and shoes for anonymous customers, it was with the intention to produce merchandise which would look hand-made. The very word manufacture lost its meaning, it is now used to denote machine production.

*Opposite page: This absolutely unbreakable corset, charged with electro-magnetism, cured quickly and in a marvelous way rheumatism, paralysis, constipation, etc. Its miraculousness was attested to by such an impeccable authority as a former surgeon-general of the United States. Supposed to be worn daily (and nightly, if desired), additional dignity was imparted to this Broadway product by the British coat-of-arms, stamped on each corset.*

From Harper's Bazar, 1883.



# 1883---New Prices!---1883. DR. SCOTT'S ELECTRIC CORSET.

\$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50, \$3.

Owing to the unprecedented success attending the sale and use of our \$3 Electric Corset, and the constant demand for Electric Corsets of less price, but of the same therapeutic value, we have decided to place upon the market **A HANDSOME LINE OF ELECTRIC CORSETS**, ranging in price from \$1 to \$3, thus bringing them within the reach of all who desire them. They are equally charged with electro magnetism, the difference being only in the quality of material. The higher grades are made of extra fine English Sateen, while those of lesser price are of correspondingly good quality.

All are made on the latest approved Parisian models, thus imparting a graceful and attractive figure to the wearer. By a recently invented process of boning or cording, we are enabled to offer to the public an **ABSOLUTELY UNBREAKABLE** Corset, and will guarantee them as such with all ordinary wear.

Being "Electric," "Unbreakable," the true French shape, and of **better material** than those ordinarily sold at the prices, these Corsets will command the preference of the purchaser. They are constructed on scientific principles, generating an exhilarating, health-giving current to the whole system. Their therapeutic value is unquestioned, and they quickly cure, in a marvelous manner, Nervous Debility, Spinal Complaints, Rheumatism, Paralysis, Numbness, Dyspepsia, Liver and Kidney troubles, Impaired Circulation, Constipation, and all other diseases peculiar to women, particularly those of sedentary habits. They also become, when constantly worn, equalizing agents in all cases of extreme fatness or leanness, by imparting to the system the required amount of "odoric force" which Nature's law demands.

Scientists are daily making known to the world the indisputably beneficial effects of Electro-Magnetism, when properly and scientifically applied to the human body in this manner; and it is also affirmed by professional men that there is hardly a disease which Electricity and Magnetism will not benefit or cure, and all medical men daily practice the same. Ask your own physician!

**DR. W. A. HAMMOND**, of New York,

Late Surgeon-General of the U. S., an eminent authority publishes almost miraculous cures coming under his notice. Always doing good, never harm, there is no shock or sensation felt in wearing them.

The ordinary Electric Battery, when resorted to in similar cases to those above mentioned, is often too powerful

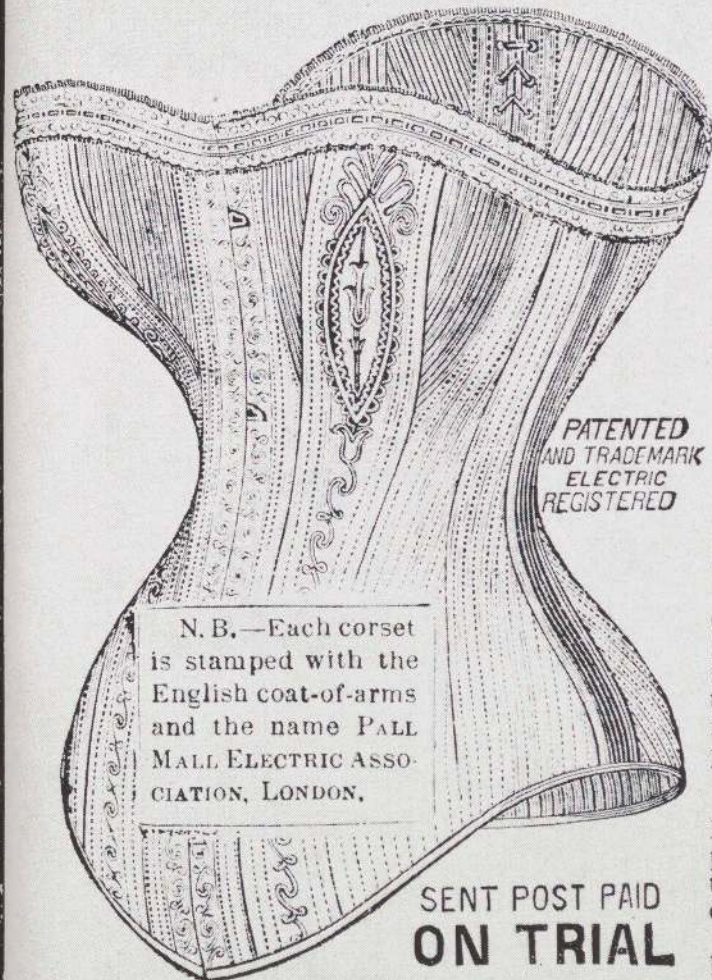
and exciting doing good during the operation, but leaving the patient more exhausted and weakened than before; whereas by daily (and nightly, too, if desired) wearing our Electric Corset as ordinary corsets are usually worn, a gentle and exhilarating influence is lastingly and agreeably perceptible, quickly accomplishing that good for which they are worn. They will never harm even in the most sensitive cases.

Ladies who have once tried them say they will wear no others. The prices are as follows: \$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50 and \$3. The two latter kinds are made in Pink, Blue, White and Dove; the others in White and Dove only. Each Corset is sent out in a handsome box, accompanied by a silver-plated compass, by which the electromagnetic influence of the Corsets can be tested. We will send either kind to any address, postpaid, on receipt of the price; also add 10 cents for registration, to insure safe delivery. Remit in P. O. Money Order, Draft, Check, or in Currency, by Registered Letter.

In ordering, kindly mention this publication, and state exact size of Corset usually worn; or, where the size is not known, take a tight measurement of the waist over the linen. This can be done with a piece of common string, which send with your order. Make all remittances payable to

**GEO. A. SCOTT, 842 Broadway, N. Y.**

DR. SCOTT'S ELECTRIC HAIR BRUSH—new prices \$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50 and \$3—sent postpaid on receipt of price.



PATENTED  
AND TRADEMARK  
ELECTRIC  
REGISTERED

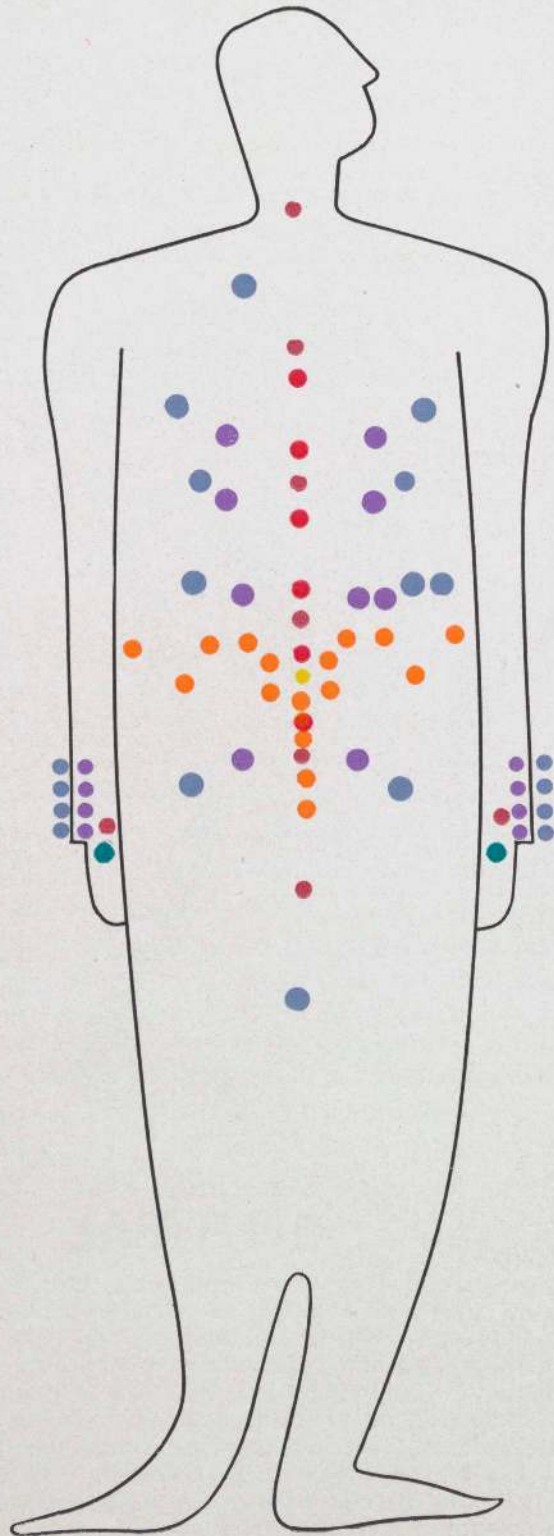
N. B.—Each corset is stamped with the English coat-of-arms and the name **PALL MALL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, LONDON.**

SENT POST PAID  
ON TRIAL



## Buttons

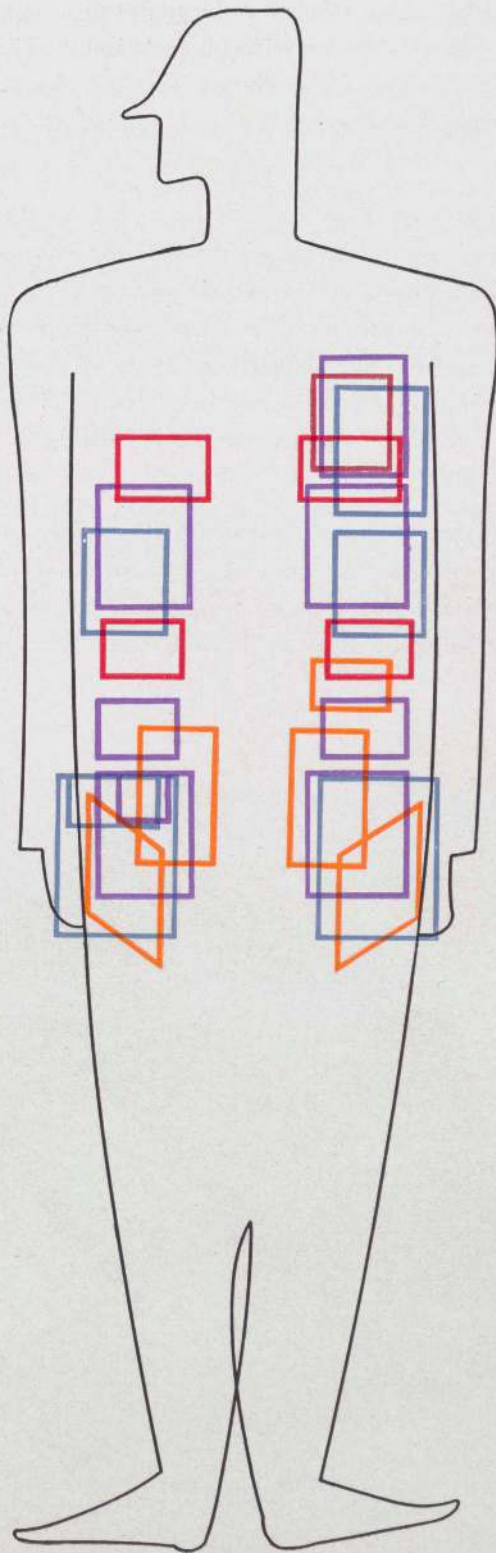
*Fully clothed man carries seventy or more buttons, most of them useless. He has at his disposal two dozen pockets.*



drawers	■	2
trousers	■	16
shirt	■	8
vest	■	6
coat	■	17
overcoat	■	19
gloves	■	2
	—	70



Pockets



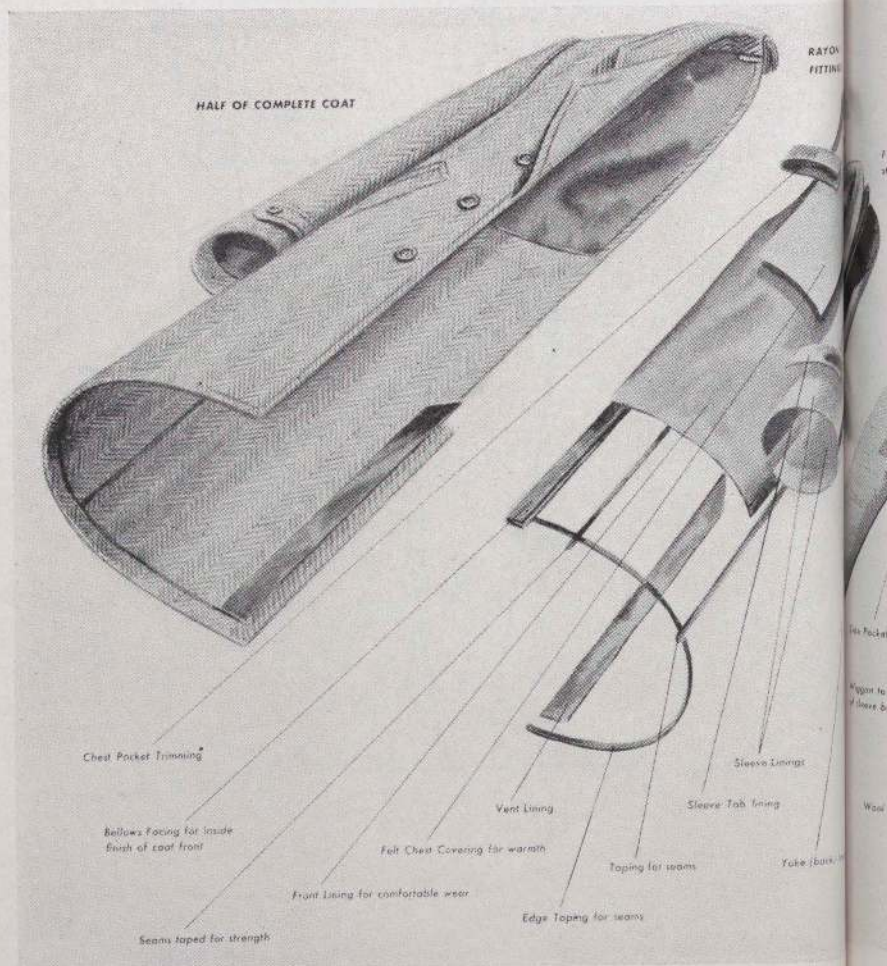
shirt	■	1
trousers	■	5
vest	■	4
coat	■	8
overcoat	■	6
	—	24



For one thing, machines are not propitious to inventions; there is no need for craftsmen to run them. As changes in design made the high investments less profitable, the clothing style which reigned at the advent of mass-production was frozen indefinitely. Men's dress especially is a curiosity which only the trained historian is able to enjoy fully. The cuffs, collars, lapels, tails, bands and buttons which once had a *raison d'être*, now are but fossilized ornaments.

The lapels, these vastly unnecessary flaps are little more than the gauge of sartorial standard. Books on costume give much space to the biography of these and other vestiges; their origins and vicissitudes are irrelevant for our considerations. It is sufficient to enumerate some appendages and symbols to prove that today's dress is archaic. For instance, the three or four buttons on the jacket's sleeve do not have corresponding buttonholes. Of the holes only the ciliary edge of embroidery remains, the slit is missing in ready-made suits.

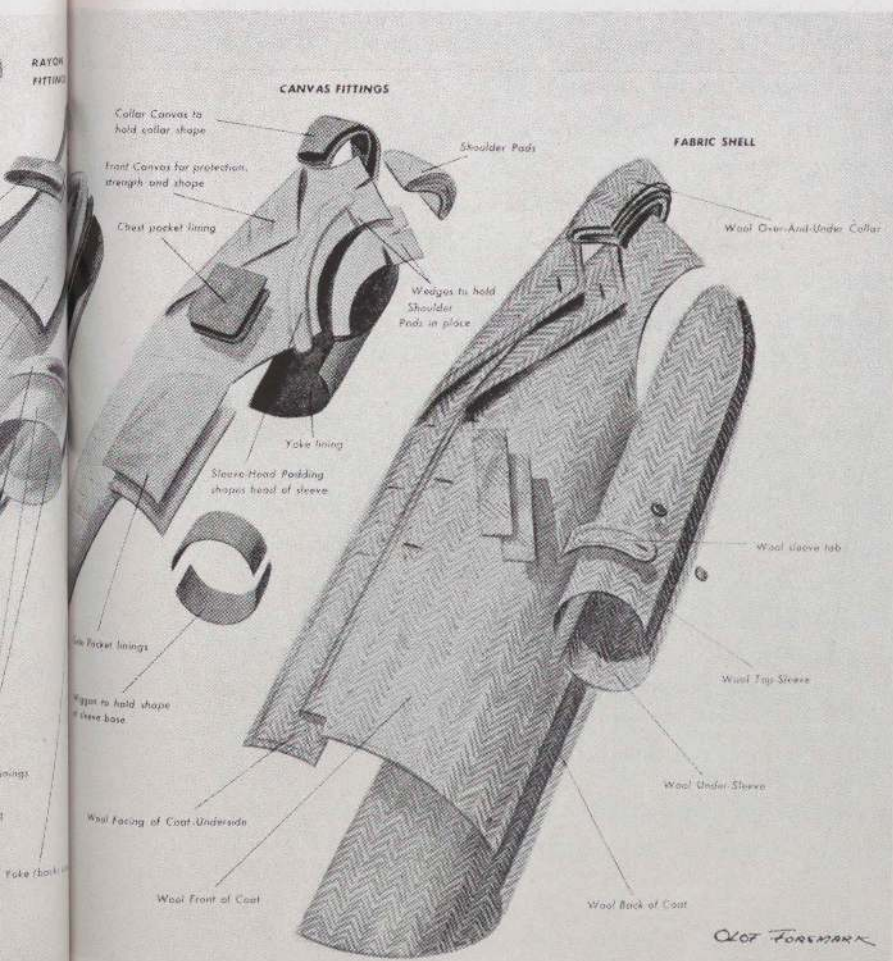
The jacket's collar in its modern form is likewise a decorative rudiment. Putting up one's collar reveals its false back—an ugly patch of different material—which clearly indicates that it is no longer expected to perform such service. A classical example of decay is the waist-coat, a species that





is rapidly becoming extinct in countries where clothing is made by tailors. From a full-fledged piece of dress, the waist-coat degenerated to little more than a bib. It is an integral part of another absurdity, formal dress. Far beyond the purchasing power of the average consumer, formal dress is so seldom displayed that—with the exception of servants and diplomats—its possession represents one of the most unreasonable investments in a man's life.

To make things worse, there is a duality of evening dress; The beetle-black dinner jacket which is supposed to radiate festivity, and the not-a-bit-gayer tail-coat for superlative occasions; the distinction is mainly in the degree of discomfort. Happily, the tail-coat is in its decline, and it does not disturb the countenance of the gentleman to see the sumptuous livery being adopted by waiters as their work dress. With it disappears the cylindrical headpiece, the top hat. From a safety helmet of the fox hunter, when it served to cushion his fall, it became the appropriate head covering at funeral ceremonies, and today it is little more than a requisite for the buffooneries of cabaret entertainers. It enjoyed its last days of glory when, some twenty years ago, the dictator of Turkey forbade the traditional Mohammedan headdress and donned for good example the towering black cylinder.



"Exploded" overcoat, a graphic analysis of construction.

Copyright, 1945, by Esquire, Inc.  
919 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, Ill.  
(Apparel Arts, October, 1945).



Already in 1872, when our great-grandfathers were young, George H. Darwin showed that the male costume was permeated with a mass of senseless detail. In an essay on the analogy between the development of dress and the evolution of organisms he points out that many parts of dress had long ceased to be of any use, but were still preserved unchangedly in an atrophied condition.<sup>56</sup> He is most annoyed by that vestige of the first order, the nick of the coat's collar, and rightly complains that it cannot be put up and buttoned around the neck. Though the button-hole is still in evidence, he observes, the button is missing, and the nick does not come into the right place. Cuffs, he says, are not turned up any more as at the time when coats were made of velvet or silk; yet the trimmings of cuffs with buttons and hole-less button-holes are still *de rigueur*. In conclusion, Darwin supposes that men want to keep archaic forms of dress for ceremonial occasions. From the variety of sartorial knick-knack that covers everyday dress, we may infer that man's work-a-day world is a pretty solemn one.

What glass beads are to the savage, buttons and pockets are to the civilized. Modern man can't have enough of these ornaments. Buttons and pockets are symbols. Military and civilian uniforms are cluttered with the childish foolery. Clothes horse and soldier alike are dripping with pommels and balls and knobs, in clusters, in rows, double-buttoned, double-breasted, on caps and collars, half-dollar size on the chest, tiny buds sprouting on the sleeves. There are pockets, and buttons on the pockets; symbolic pockets with a symbolic button on a pocketless flap. Every Wac's and Wave's uniform has two fake pockets over the breasts, insignia of officiousness. War emergency did not inflict thoughtfulness on the maker of phony dress.

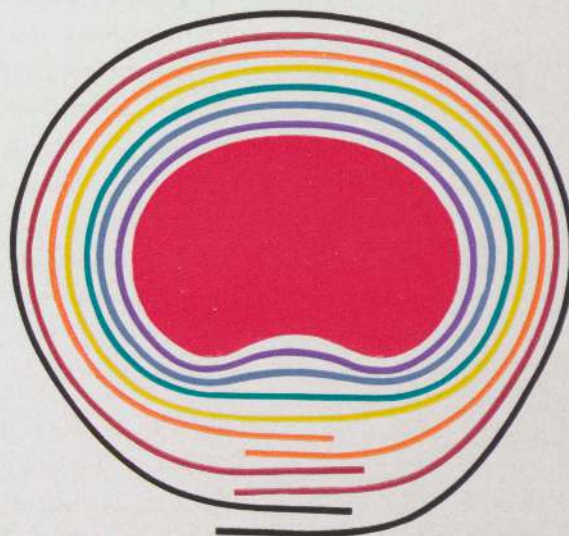


*Fake pockets on modern uniform.  
"Jacket, women's, winter (class B)."  
From Quartermaster Corps Specification.*



The seven veils of the male stomach.

- undershirt
- drawers
- shirt
- trousers
- vest
- coat
- overcoat



During the war, Navy men were almost unanimous in condemning the indignity and discomfort of their uniform. But the same government that did the impossible to keep the armed forces in good spirits, remained deaf to their complaints. How could it be otherwise? Had food been criticized, investigations would have found remedies for any shortcomings; dietitians and chemists can be relied upon their findings; physiologists have ways to appraise the value of food as stimulant and palatal pleasure. But the case is different with clothing. In an age that has superstitiously refused to face the problem of clothing in an intelligent and unbiased way, we cannot expect the government to be an exception. On the contrary, uniforms are always more eccentric than civilian dress. In the military uniform all the symbols, vestiges and taboos of civilian clothing are superabundant. Even under its most serious aspect—as protection for the fighting man—clothing is subject to fancy, is fashionable clothing. A few specialized garments that are worn by more recent branches of military men, the outfits of parachutists, high-altitude fliers, submarine crews—these are comparatively free from the ballast of the past. Though based on traditional clothing, they sometimes attain a remarkable degree of functionalism and are spared non-sensical decoration. In a way, these special uniforms can be compared with the overalls of farmers and factory workers, which are hardly subject to seasonal changes of fashion.





*The fashionable Tibetan woman can dispense with a handbag. Her necklace contains tooth pick, ear spoon, tongue scraper and other essential toilet articles.*

*From Buschan, Sitten der Völker.*

The editor of a servicemen's magazine received many thousands of letters from dissatisfied men. Analyzing their claims, it appeared that the sailor's uniform excelled all others in compliance with the pocket and button ceremonial. Its pockets are mainly ornamental; sailors "have to carry cigarets in the socks, a wallet hung over the pants top and a handkerchief on the shoulder. These things are always getting lost. The jumper, so difficult to put on and take off that it is necessary to brush one's hair after every operation, is another source of inconvenience, while the thirteen buttons on the pants cause more consternation than respect for the fact that they are supposed to commemorate the thirteen original American colonies."<sup>57</sup> When we further hear that the distasteful uniform keeps reservists from staying in the Navy and even Army men from transferring to the Navy, it becomes obvious that the policy adopted by the Uniform Board in Washington is detrimental to the moral of fighting men.

A fully dressed man of the twentieth century commands the use of two dozen pockets. Assuming that they could all be utilized and loaded with things—pockets originated as useful appendages—the sorting out and filling up, the extracting of the pocketed objects would be a stately business. The superintending, listing and balancing of the cargo of twenty-four pockets is a task comparable to that of loading a ship. But, as the ballast would seriously injure his sartorial entity, fashion decreed that the authentic gentleman does not carry any cargo, least of all should he take advantage of the capacity of his twenty-four compartments. (An exception from this rule is the breast-pocket, holding a handkerchief; but to nullify the exception, this handkerchief in turn was declared non-utilitarian.) Here again, we witness degeneracy of functional clothing. The perfectly legitimate and helpful institution of the pouch as attached to a garment in the form of a pocket, goes rampant until, through its overgrowth, the original scope gets lost, and it ends up in decorative silliness.

Technically, the button is a most unsatisfactory looking apparatus, a hangover from—possibly—the neolithic age. On modern garments, buttons grow like fungi. They erupt periodically on female articles in unsuspected places while they are kind of ingrown into the male wardrobe. The pockets of the male outfit are complemented by six to seven dozen buttons, functional, magical and otherwise. Only a minority of them afford the refuge of a buttonhole; the rest remain at large. Buttons are vulnerable. The end comes to them quicker than to the garment itself. Buttons come loose or splinter, thanks to mechanized laundering; buttonholes of the manufactured suit are apt to contract a chronic infirmity similar to scurvy.

The slide fastener, still in its teens and sometimes awkward, is of singular interest for it might put an end to an age-old custom born from superstition: the distinction between male and female clothing by buttoning right and left. There is no doubt as to the dual character of present-day clothes. Any piece of fabric can be charged with sexuality by simply working it into a precise



*This shirt is remarkable for its departure from the archaic system of male and female garments, as distinguished by buttoning right and left. It represents an asexual shirt, so to say, and may be worn by men and women alike, without their being accused of transvestism.*

*Courtesy Cavu Clothes, Inc.*



shape. The resulting form might determine the actual sex. The artist can imbue dead material with that precise meaning. He may resort to realism or symbolism; he may choose to produce an image of the human form, or he may substitute for it any significant part of the body. His is the straight way of expression which is known to us since prehistoric time. But the impermeation of sexual meaning into clothes is of later and more subtle work.

The overlap of a blouse, a jacket or a coat determines the sex of the article. By buttoning a garment on the right side, it becomes suitable for men only and definitely unsuitable for women. Whatever the quaint explanations of folklore are, the right side of the body has always been male, the left side female; this orientation survived despite its irrationality. As the slide fastener can do without an overlap, this leaves us without a cue to the sex of clothing. In fact, some shirts which solely use the sliding device, are already made in one single edition for both sexes. If, through the diffusion of the asexual slide fastener the use of buttons declines—they disappeared already from our shoes—the arbitrary distinction between men's and women's clothing will vanish more rapidly.



*"Her brother's trousers."*  
Drawing by Richard Newton.



Any investigation of the merits of modern dress must take into account its outstanding characteristic: the marked distinction between the sexes. Such distinction seems to us a matter of course, if not a law of nature, yet there is hardly anything more artificial and more arbitrary than the insistence on male and female garments. Reducing clothing to its simplest static terms, it is a body covering, carried and upheld by the human figure. The points of suspension are three: head, shoulders and waist. All three are equally common with men and women. Sexual characteristics do not warrant any outspoken dissimilarity of attire. Early epochs were unconcerned with the duality of dress—garments with a distinct sexual quality are typical of later, more complicated society.

The early Greeks could do without distinct clothes for the sexes; so could Asiatic races like the Persians and early Assyrians. The Hebrews were content





*Lao Kay women (Indo-China).*  
*From Holtmont, Hosenrolle.*

with a single garment for men and women, and, according to the authority of Tacitus, the Teutons did not differ in this respect from the Hebrews. The matter becomes more involved when we try to define the nature of what is by common consent accepted as male and female attire. Throughout the history of mankind, probably more men than women wore skirts, more women than men wore trousers.

Industrial civilization has promoted the skirt as the female garment *par excellence*, while trousers are held to be the outward expression of manliness. Psychoanalysis is ever ready with interpretation;\* the psychology of dress is

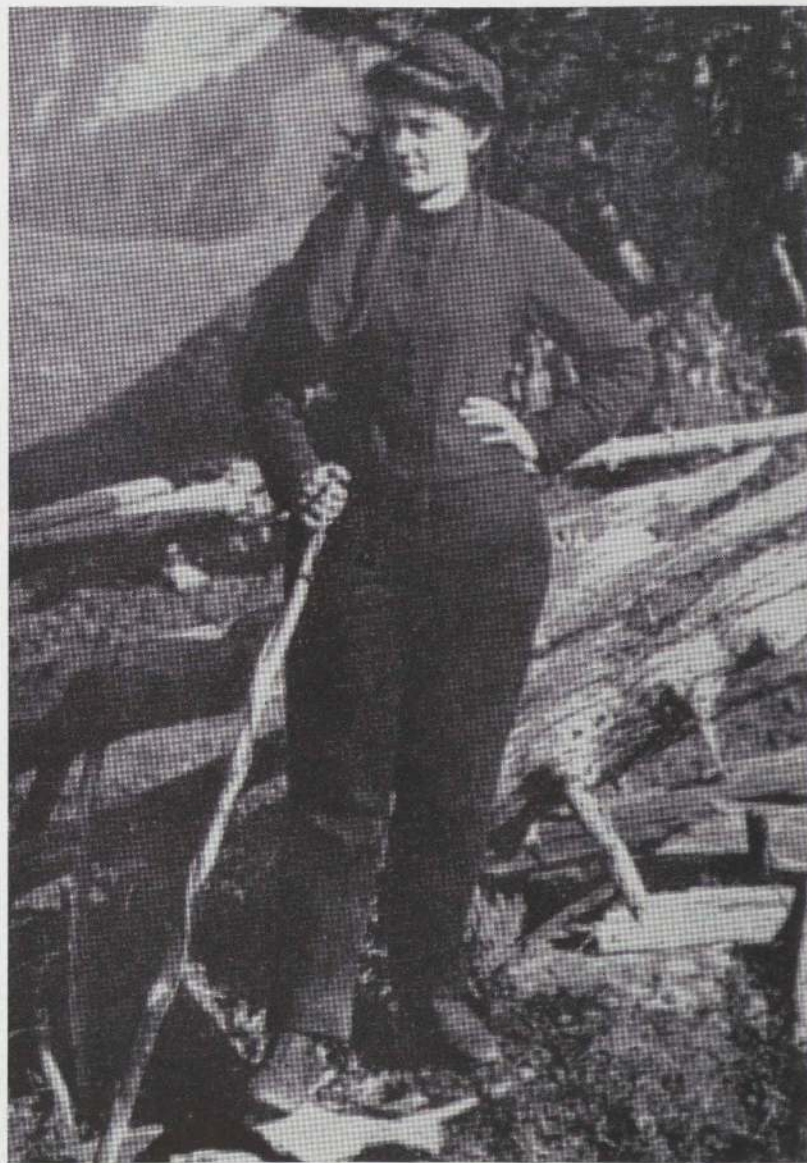
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\* *Trousers, like hats, collars and coats, are generally recognized as phallic symbols. There are also corresponding uterine symbols, while the shoe is ambisexual.*









*Three photographs from Holtmont, Hosenrolle: Algerian Jewesses. Frenchwoman in trouser-skirt, about 1912. Swiss peasant woman from the valley of Champéry.*





*Above and opposite page: Maharaja and courtier.  
India, seventeenth century.  
From Martin, Miniature Painting etc.*





*Evzones.*

*Courtesy Greek office of information.*



however too delicate to be explained away with a few commonplaces. Despite the accepted belief that the bisected garment belongs to man, and that the folds of the skirt should only hide female legs, this conception is not justified. Apart from the examples of costume history, let it suffice to state that all those Hungarians, Greeks and Scots who like to don more or less voluminous skirts have testified to their virility. And the unsophisticated women who wore trousers for practical purposes bore children in spite of it.

There is no evidence that the anatomical difference of the sexes deserves radically different clothes. In our time, when the utility principle overshadows any other consideration, working women automatically adopt male dress because it is preferable from the point of view of manual operations and of safety. Oriental civilization with its highest ethical standards often completely reverses the clothing of the sexes. But has it ever occurred to us to think of robed men as effeminate, or of their trouser-clad women as degenerate? The notion that a man's legs have to be wrapped separately while women should be barred from such custom can indeed be traced to racial laws only, the origin of which has long been forgotten. If trousers are supposed to satisfy considerations of modesty, then they should obviously belong to women. "Man's most precious ornament" is better hidden in the folds of a male skirt, and the history of the cod-piece corroborates this argument. If it occurs to the unbiased observer that tubular encasings are ugly on women, he should not hesitate to admit that they are equally unflattering to men.

In the United States the case is simple enough; laws and regulations tell what the citizen may wear. But it is interesting to note that, though women may borrow the complete attire of men without incurring punishment, transvestism by men is considered a grave offense. Which proves that men's clothing has lost much, if not all, of its masculine significance. The explanation for this occurrence might be found in various aspects of social life. This country unavowedly is a matriarchy; it is therefore not surprising that, though women may temporarily usurp their mates' dress, reciprocity is out of question. Also, puritanism has paradoxically fostered an exaggerated and unhealthy appreciation of sexuality of the female sort, such as shown in its commercialized version of the alleged sex-appeal, and in its absorption by the advertising business.

But modern dress is not only infested with symbolism of the sexual kind, it is still subject to the most extravagant social taboos. The following example illustrates the point. The shirt of the American soldier is one of the gratifying things which have emerged from the clothing problems of the war. Though its cuffs, collar and button ceremonial are deplorable archaic ornaments, there is the phenomenal discovery that a man in a shirt *is* a complete being and is to be respected as such. In this daring attire, the soldier is, believe it or not, acceptable not merely in bars for men only, but he is welcome in the dining rooms of the most discriminating hotels.



Let anyone try to imitate the soldier's example! In the large cities, the civilian sans jacket is looked upon as unspeakably vulgar, and he will be thrown out of any decent place in no time.\* Comfort is debatable, and if the absurd concept of men's dress is desirable for the peace of mind, nobody will be able to do much against it. As the tribal taboo is so much stronger than the desire for genuine comfort, it is to be expected that the few clothing privileges gained during the war will be scrapped in short order.

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\* *A daily paper printed the photograph of a soldier's family attending a decorating ceremony at the White House. The civilian father, like his uniformed son, was admitted in shirt sleeves, a fact both remarkable and significant because, as the paper reports, the night before he had been asked to leave a hotel dining room on account of his liberal attire.*<sup>58</sup>



*Hungarian peasants.*

*From Paulini, The Pearly Bouquet.*





*Maiden, archaic Greek sculpture found on the Acropolis.  
Photograph courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.*



## *Cut and dry goods*

The costume of the classic civilization was of the gravitational sort—a loose-fitting dress—in contrast to the anatomical, tight-fitting one of the barbarians. Man's and woman's coverings were pretty much alike—nothing more than pieces of material which, by putting them on the body, became dress. This was, no doubt, a simple and ingenious method. Though one would expect that the effect of so much artlessness was poor and uninteresting, the costumes which resulted from the loose wrappings were always held in high esteem and still seem to us a peak of man's achievement.

There is no evidence that this kind of apparel was anywhere as regimented as costume books and paintings of historic incidents would like us to believe. The study of the classical costume unfolds a panorama of seemingly unlimited versions of what we vaguely imagine as a kind of classical uniform. Female dress, though it can be traced to no more than half a dozen well established basic shapes, was as varied as the dress of any following period. The collection of Ionic statuettes at the Acropolis Museum is a most charming and complete documentary of that epoch's costume. The figures, known as the Maidens, once stood in the luxuriant wood which surrounded the temples of the Acropolis and were dedications of pious worshippers. Unlike the stereotyped saints and madonnas of our time, these Greek images delight us with their variety of garments, hairdresses and ornaments.

The Ionic chiton was nothing but an oblong piece of fabric whose dimensions varied with the countries that belonged to the same culture. The classical garment was radically different from anything modern, however similar it might seem to us. The Empire dress, or the latest evening gown fashioned



along classical lines, have nothing in common with it. Practically all our wardrobe is tailored according to a pattern derived from anatomically fitting clothes. The antique dress is quite different, it is an uncut piece of material draped by skillful hands.

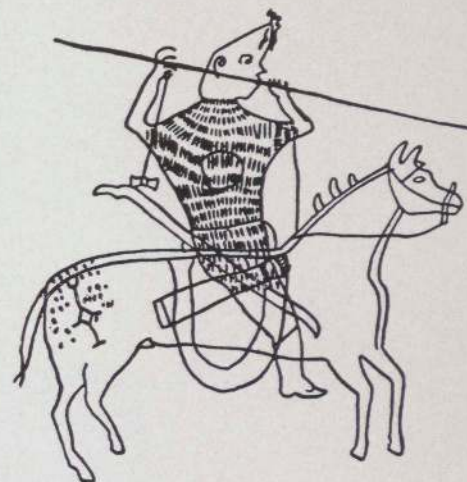
Whenever we speak of the democratic character so wrongly ascribed to present-day clothes, we should remember that the Greek costume was truly a symbol of equality. The cloth being woven by the housewives themselves, there was hardly any difference in its quality. As the length of the pieces was prescribed by custom or tradition, the looks of the dress were entirely determined by the ability to wear it. Posture was inseparable from the ultimate effect of the costume. The best dressed man or woman was therefore the one who knew how to wear the dress best, who embodied grace, charm and wit, qualities which are not related to any economic status.





Today, the loose type of clothing is found in the far Orient, in parts of Central and South America and Australia. Though scarcely any climatic changes occurred in the Old World, the classic type of dress disappeared together with the civilization that had produced it. Conquered by the barbarians from the East and North, the people accepted the invader's ways of living and, consequently, their mode of dressing. The thick garments and tight foot coverings of an unfriendly climate were worn as a tribute of submission.

The invaders,—hunters and nomads—had evolved a dress which was borrowed from animals. It was more or less a simulation of the varieties of animals' skin with all its highly protective qualities. Skin-like, it followed closely the anatomical characteristics and formed the ugly funnel-like excrescences, known as sleeves and trousers. Pictorial documents from antiquity also present women in tubular sleeves and trousers; generally, however, they wore



*Right and opposite page:*  
*Derviches, sixteenth century.*

*From Martin, Miniature Painting etc.*

*At top, right: Siberian nomad.*  
*Rock painting from Yenisei.*



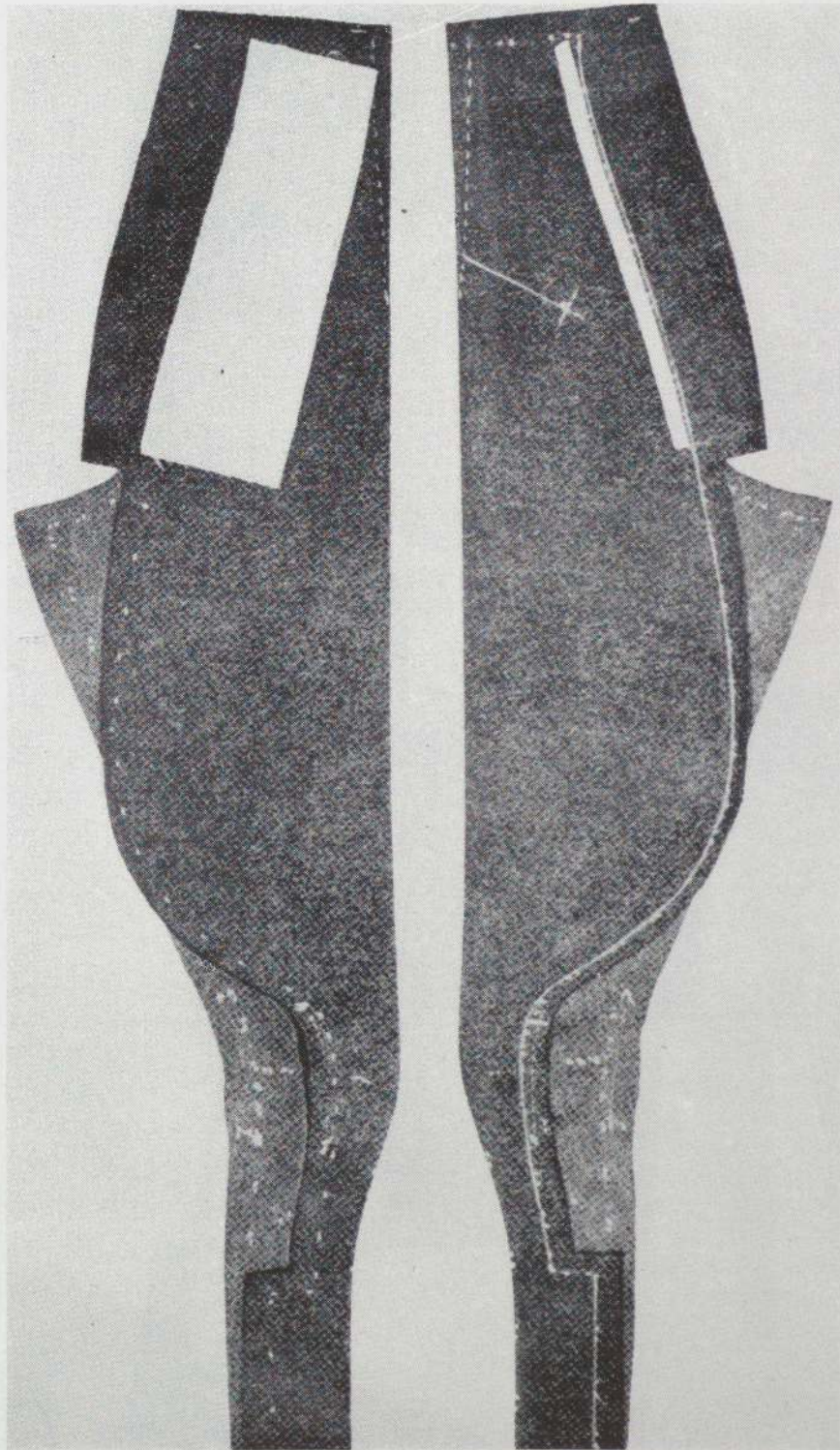


*"Fancy sleeves for summer gowns."*

*From Harper's Bazar, 1900.*



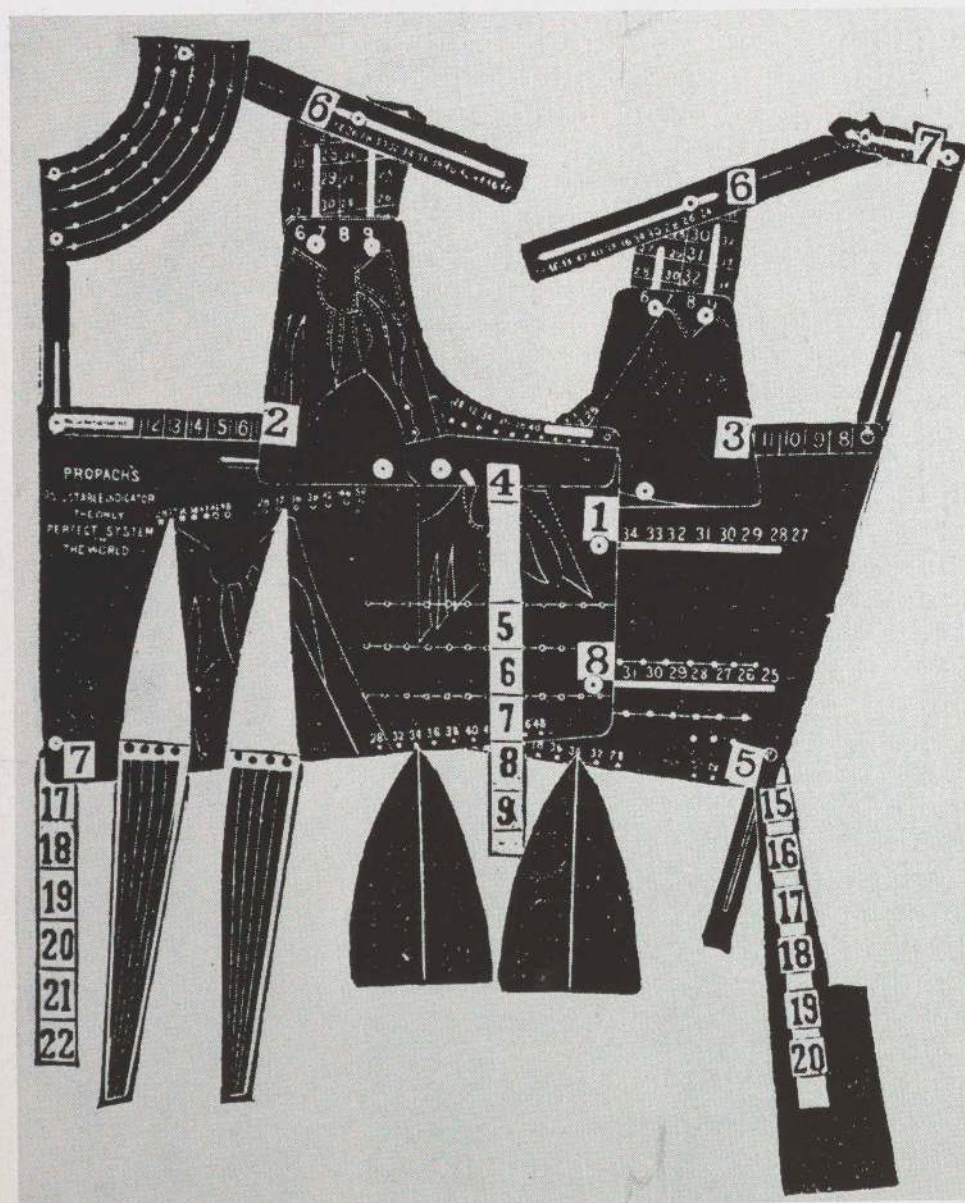
*Pattern for riding breeches from a textbook on tailoring.*





long and narrow shirt-like garments which they made from such fabrics as they were able to produce. The tight-fitting dress of the hunter was made from irregularly shaped furs and hides. In order to accommodate the contours of the human form, this material had to be joined and patched, which led to considerable waste. The desire to economize and to evolve typical hollow forms gave impulse to pattern making. Our jackets and trousers are actually achievements of the bronze age.

Advertisement from Harper's Bazar, 1886.



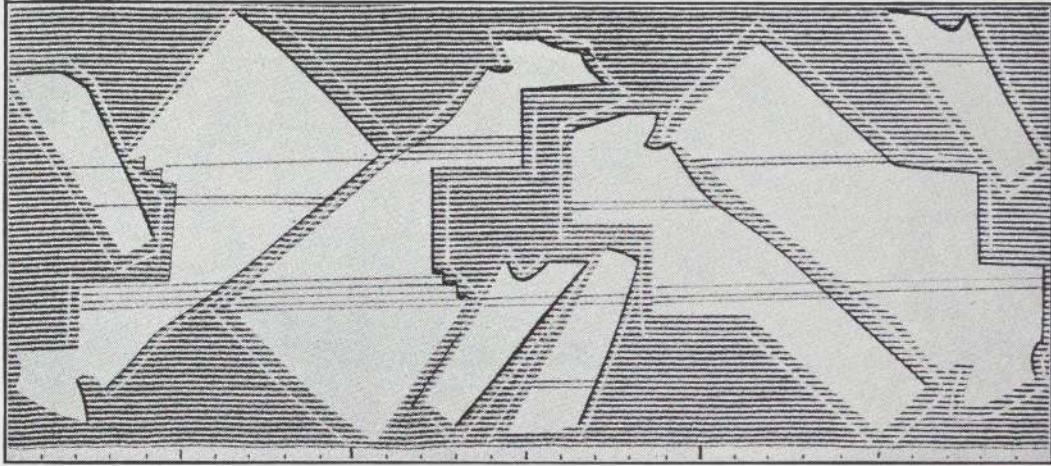
## Propach's Indicator.

The greatest invention of the age. Represents the most accurate and perfect system of Dress-Cutting in the world. As shown by cut, every part is adjustable to the nine measures required—neck and shoulders being raised or lowered to the actual measures, and when removed the impression of the entire waist is given. The Indicator is the result of long and careful study, by the inventor, of the art of dress-making, having had large experience in the principal cities in Europe, as well as in New York; and has brought the *real French* method of cutting by *square rule* down to a *tangible* and *practical* form. Nothing comparable with it in style of fit can approach this system in *saving time*; a *basque* can be cut in *six minutes*, and fit *guaranteed*. Agencies will be placed in the hands of reliable parties in all cities. Send for circular, with terms to agents. Address,

**GENERAL AGENCY**  
**PROPACH'S INDICATOR,**  
 813 Broadway, New York.



*Waste due to cutting increases when the material used has a directional design, such as this striped one.*

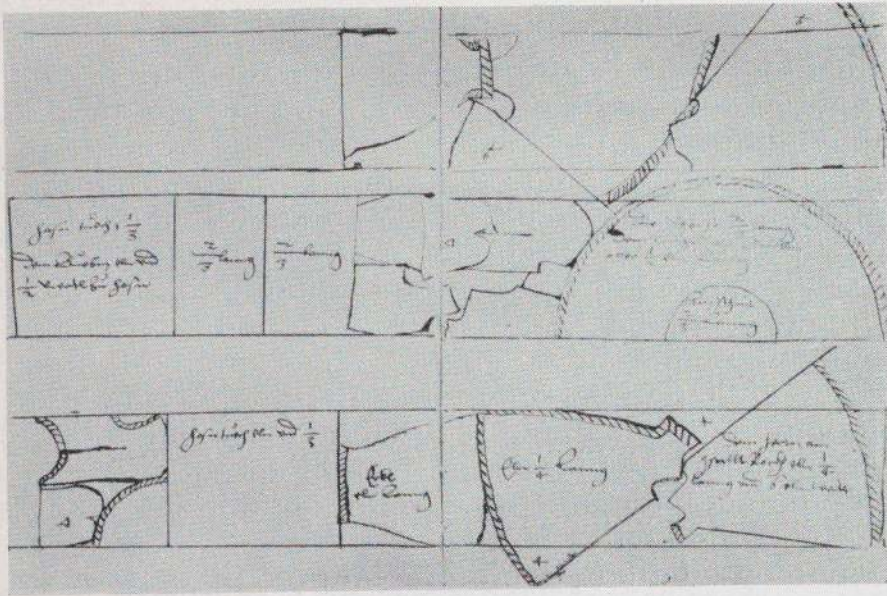


In contrast, the cultured nations of ancient times, favored by a mild climate, rapidly progressing in technology, depended for clothing material entirely on the loom. Cloth was clothing itself; material and end-product were identical. The square or rectangular piece was hung from or wrapped around the body and secured with detachable pins. As there was no desire for tightness, no fitting and, therefore, no cutting was necessary. Dress was entirely free of the curse of dress-making.

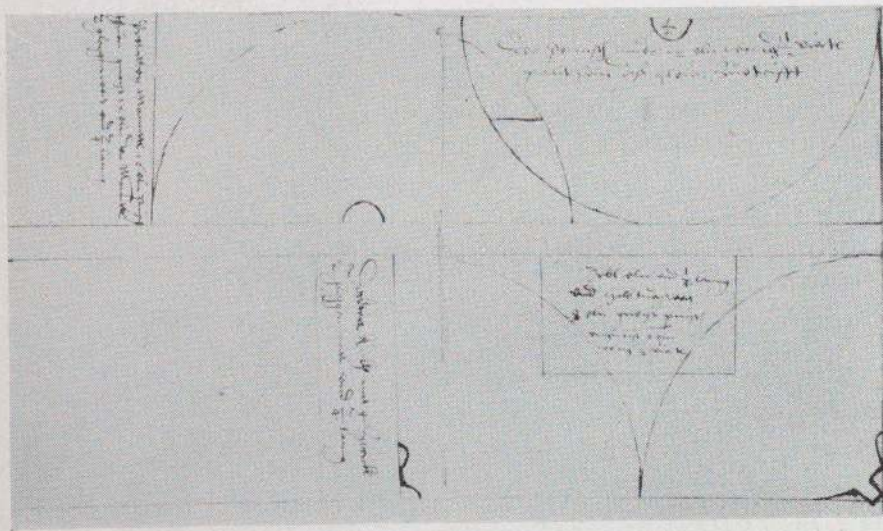
The immediate advantages of this procedure are evident; many Oriental peoples who never abandoned such beneficial dress may rightly consider us not only barbarians but slaves of a system. A wardrobe that consists of nothing but sheets can easily be stored with a minimum of space. But the ghastly body capsules of our civilizations, the clothes tubes, felt cupolas and leather vessels, require special rooms where, hanging from the gallows of clothes-, hat-, and shoe-racks, they lead a deflated existence of their own.

It was a breakdown of moral resistance which made the elite of humanity resign itself to the clothing of primitive people. The adoption of the ungraceful garments was extenuated by time and habitude, and today, the prosperity of its industry is the pride of the clothing merchant. Little does he know that he is the fanatic advocate of a type of clothing inherited from peoples to which he would colloquially refer as Huns.

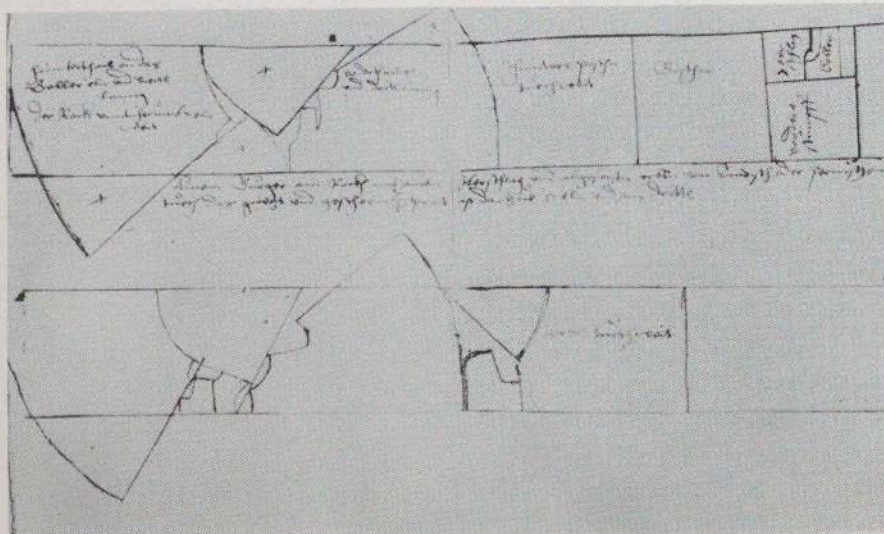




On these and on the following two pages, are shown dress patterns from four centuries. They illustrate graphically how clothes making has deteriorated with time. The design of the sixteenth century garments (left) is still of almost classical simplicity and makes full use of the material's width. In the eighteenth century pattern (right) the fabric is dissolved into a jigsaw puzzle. The nineteenth century pattern (p. 166) goes berserk.



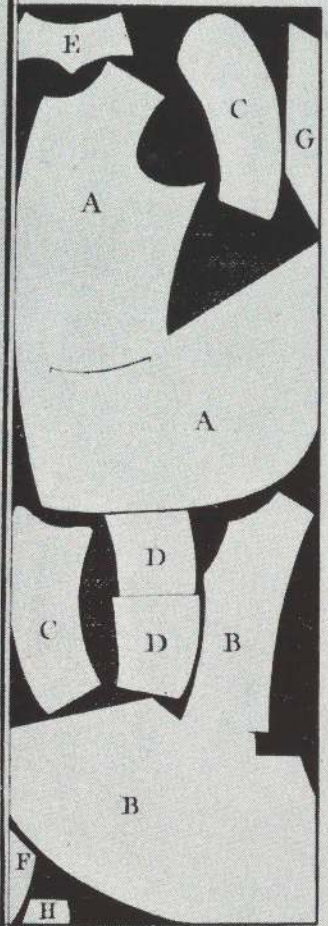
Left, six pages from an Austrian tailor's notebook. Patterns for a prelate's cloak, a doctor's and a burgher's coat. Middle of sixteenth century.



Right, dress patterns from Garsault, Art du tailleur, 1769.



Fig. III.



2<sup>me</sup> II.

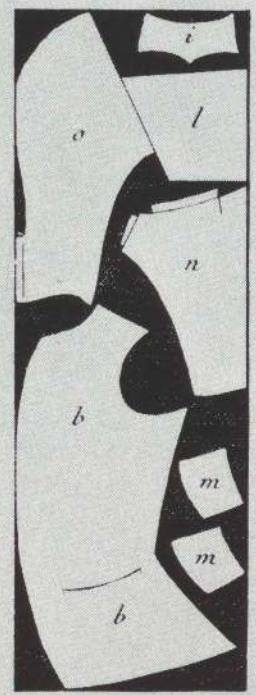


Fig. I

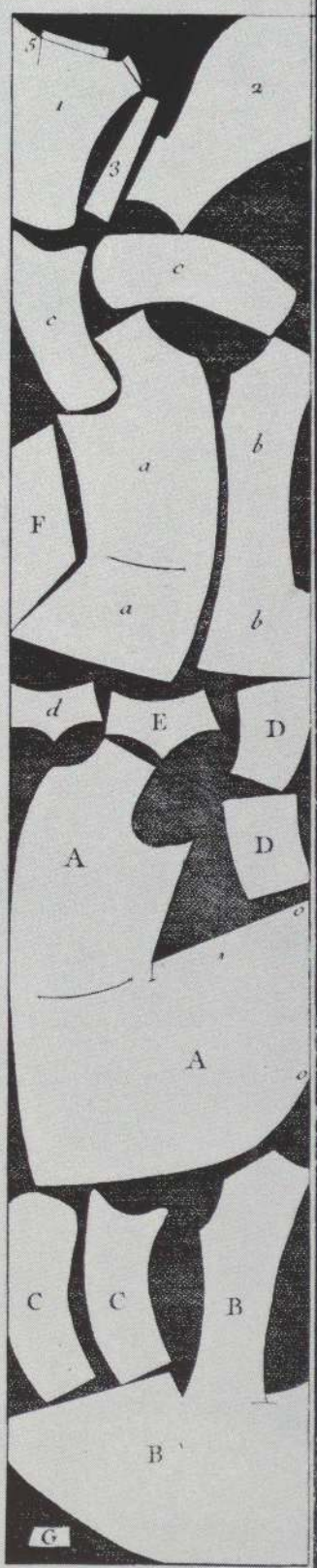


Fig. II.

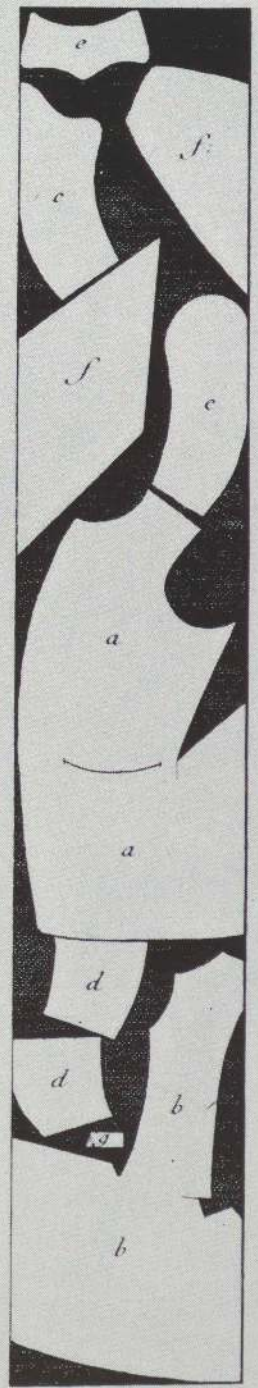


Fig. VI.

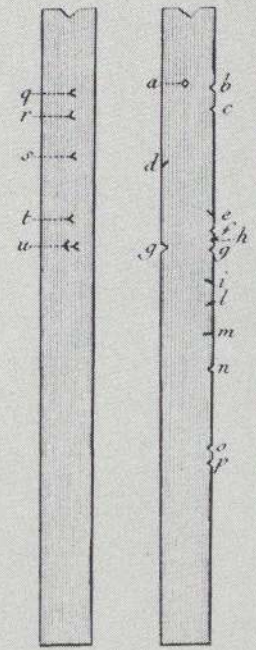


Fig. IV.

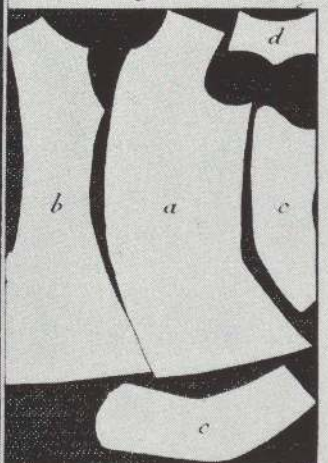
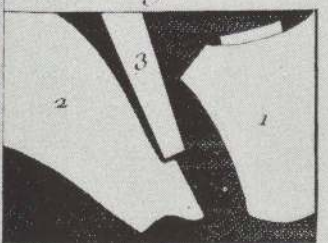
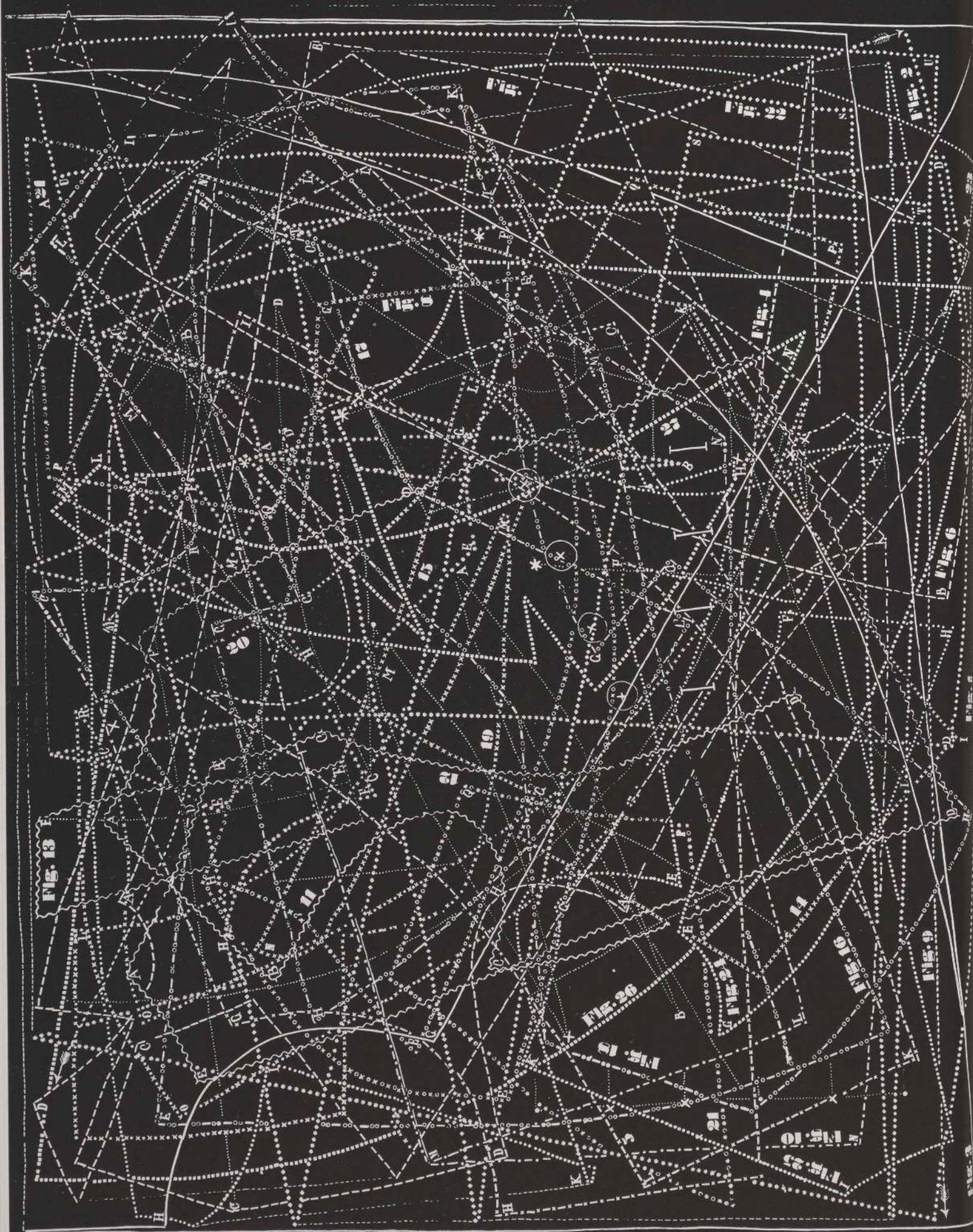


Fig. V.



une aune

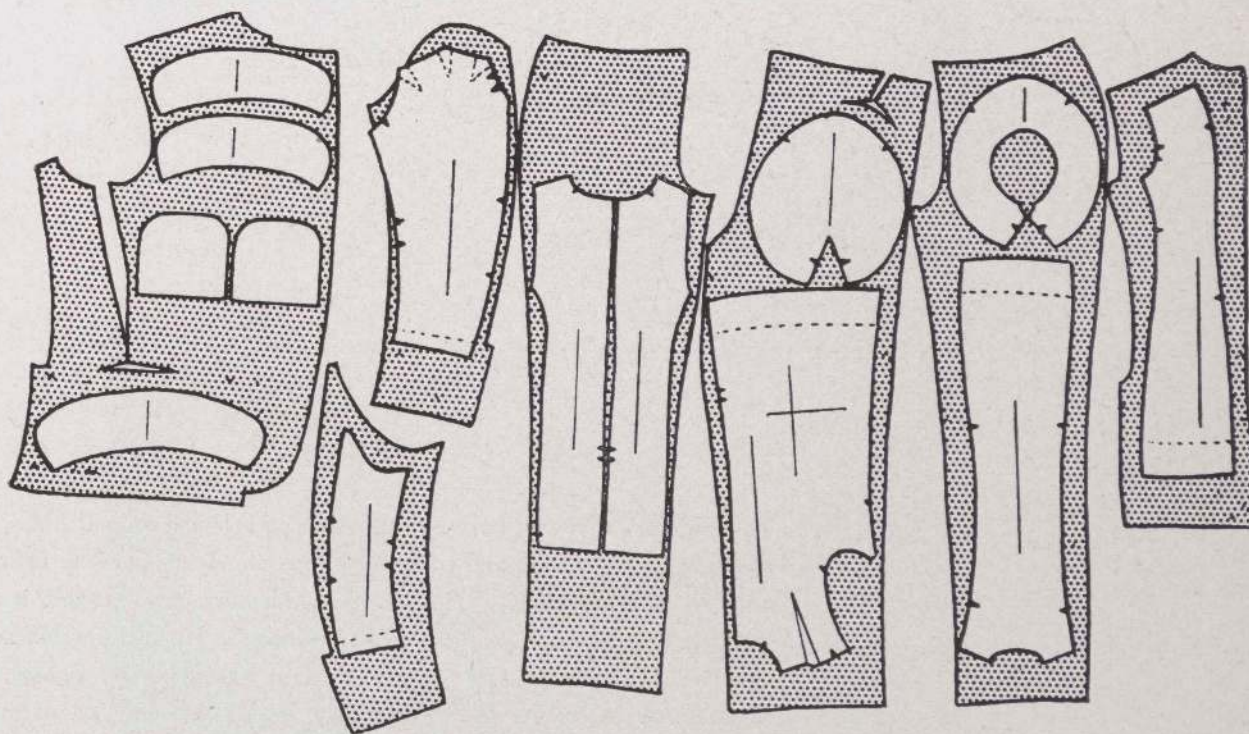






Opposite page: Pattern, 1873.

Courtesy Museum of Costume Art, New York.



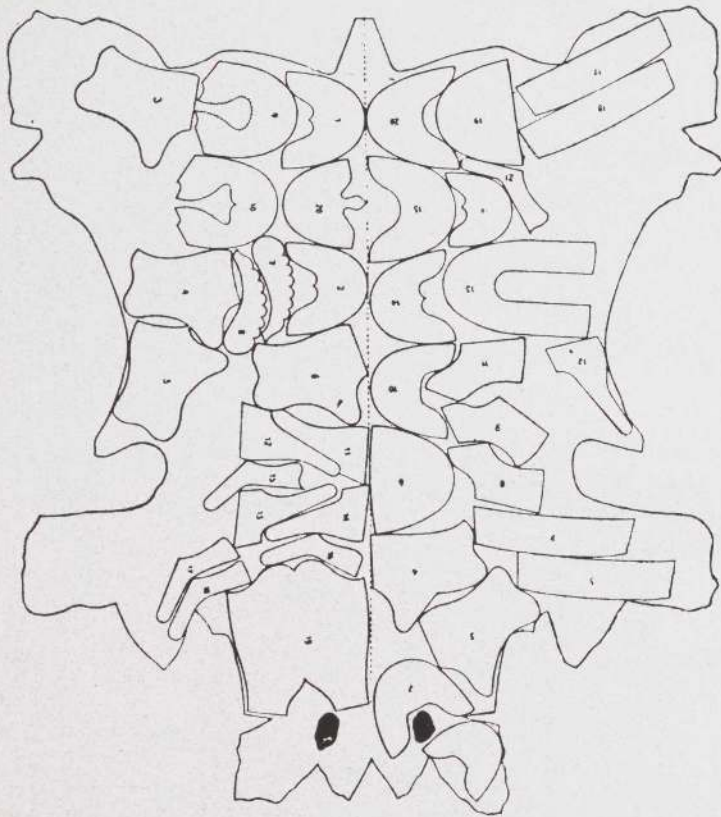
*In 1943, the government of the world's best clothed nation issued a booklet which shows how to make clothes from rags.*

*Though a well-planned minimum wardrobe can see a person through several years without making replacements, the industrial nations that entered the last war were soon faced with a clothing shortage. Inferior material, bad workmanship and the habitual quick turnover of merchandise became a liability in war-time.*

*These fantastic shapes represent the ruins of a father's suit from which, it is suggested, a child's outfit may be made with mother's help. No more humiliating example could possibly be found to demonstrate our bungling ways.*

*From Leaflet No. 230, U. S. Department of Agriculture.*





*Shoe patterns laid out on calfskin.*

Though clothes are no longer made from odd-shaped animal hides, the immaculate sheets of silks and woolens are mercilessly chopped up before being used for clothing. A good piece of cloth, whether soft or rough, is a joy to handle. We appreciate its pliability and texture, and we are not unaware of its value. Yet in order to put it to use in the only way we know, we have to cut it to pieces in order to join them together in the cabalistic art of the tailor. There goes the pliability. Should the material nonetheless betray its true nature, doubling and lining and stuffing will help to produce the cuirass, dear to the hearts of tailor and customer alike.

Paradoxically, though we have deducted from it our conception of harmony and proportion, the human figure itself does not altogether fit the demands of the esthetic laws it has inspired. Throughout the history of dress there is a persistent tendency optically to correct this deficiency. One way is to lower the center of gravity of the body. The upright figure lacks a satisfactory basis—the lower extremities which are intended for motion, do not make a harmonious pedestal. The sculptor is aware of this inadequacy, and even when using it in its most stylized form, takes recourse to the bent or folded figure. The erect and isolated statue may not lack a pathetic quality, but it will seldom have grandeur.



*Nothing demonstrates better the short-windedness of fashionable esthetics than the clothing problems which confront the artist who tries to immortalize a public hero. Since all dressmakers' fashions carry the germ of future ridicule in them, the painter and sculptor take refuge in sartorial anachronisms.*

*Statue of George Washington by Horatio Greenough.*

*Photograph courtesy Smithsonian Institution, Washington.*





It seems that the desire to correct the optical defect of balance by adding stability to the faltering body, resulted early in wrapping the legs. The solidification of the lower part of the body, male or female, has not only a pleasing effect, but adds new values to the individual. "Instead of being supported on just two legs with nothing but thin air between them, a skirted human being assumes much more ample and voluminous proportions, and the space between the legs is filled up, often with great increase of dignity."<sup>59</sup> As legs of approximately the same length are proper to both sexes, the dignity of the skirt is equally beneficial to both. Few ceremonial clothes dispense with flowing skirts; clergymen and judges wear robes to this day.

Enhancing and increasing of personality through the extension of the body with the help of clothing is a remedy as old as humanity. This intensification of the self is obtained in many ways—by towering headgear, trailing and flowing clothes, by the carrying of weapons or, even, of a humble walking-stick. Although the prolongation of the human body is not necessarily dependent on the use of clothes, they nevertheless suit one's mentality best. The space-filling skirt was in all probability among the first true garments. The theory that ascribes the cause for wrapping the legs to modesty does not account for the length of the skirts known to us from prehistoric art. Whatever the decorum of the remote epoch might have been, it would seem that the covering of the more intimate parts of the body should have satisfied any prehistoric standards of good breeding. But there is evidently more to the skirt than meets the eye.

It is not entirely by accident that we find the skirt represented in the earliest pictorial documents of humanity. In these pictures, no other type of clothing is apparent. It seems that the covering of the upper part of the body was undertaken independently and at a later time. Actually, we have to imagine that the blouse or the jacket was not added, but that it developed from the shirt-like, full-length garment through bipartition. There are good reasons for such a sequence. The lower garment shielded the reproductive organs from the demons. Or, from a more realistic viewpoint, their covering was expedient because their mechanism is not entirely under the control of the individual.



*Early skirts on a Mycenaean signet ring.*

*From Evans, The Palace of Minos at Knossos*



*"Wherever . . . we bring a foreign body into relationship with the surface of our body . . . the consciousness of our personal existence is prolonged into the extremities and surfaces of this foreign body, and the consequence is feelings now of an expansion of our proper self, now of the acquisition of a kind and amount of motion foreign to our natural organs, now of an unusual degree of vigour, power of resistance, or steadiness in or bearing."*

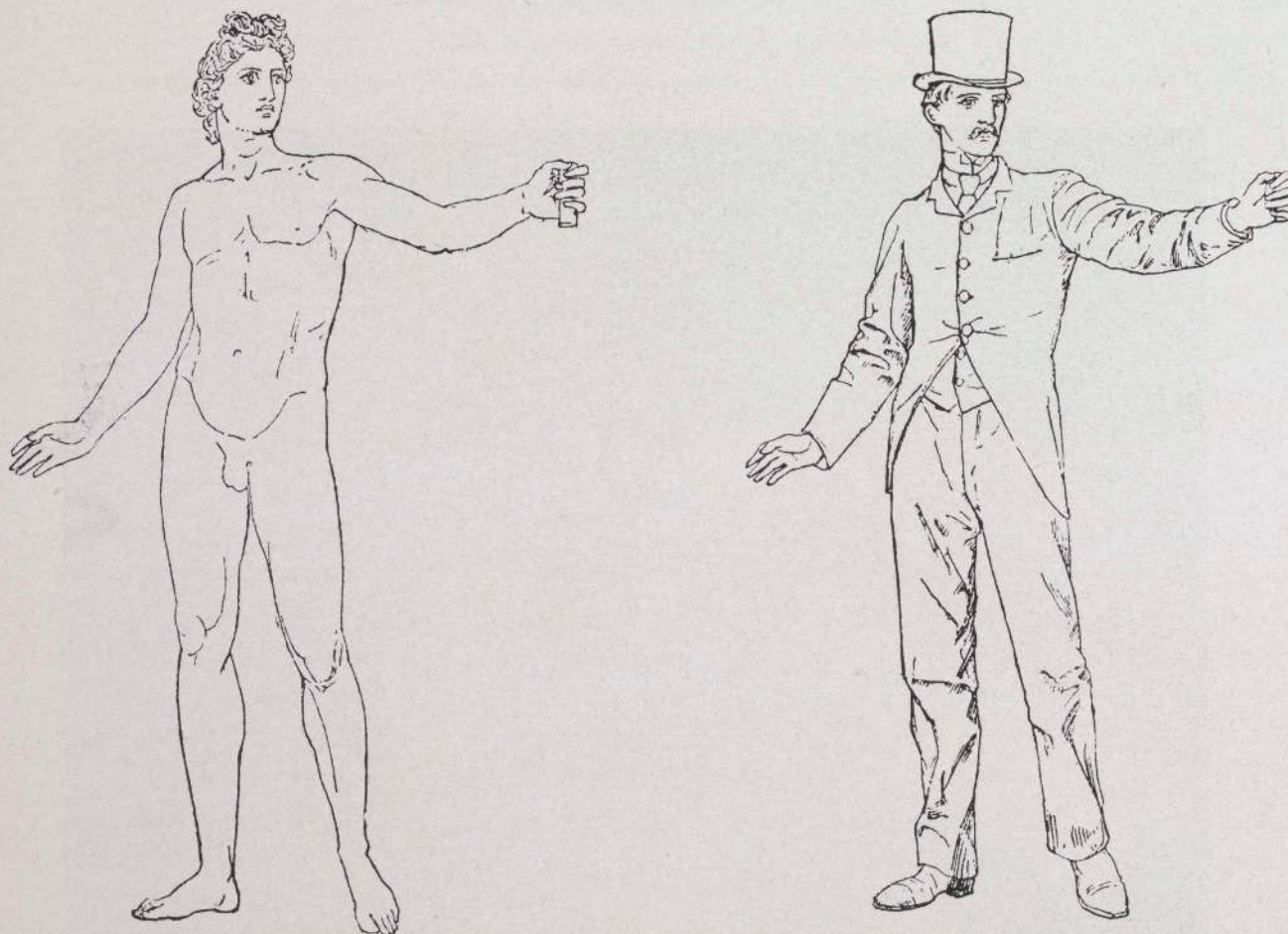
*From Lotze, Microcosmus.*

*Photograph by Barbara Morgan from her book, Martha Graham.*





Four drawings from an article on tubular dress  
in the English Illustrated Magazine, 1893.



Encasings for men's legs in the present form of hollow and relatively wide cylinders date back five generations or, more precisely, to the start of the French Revolution, when a social taboo was fixed to knee-breeches and stockings. The full length trousers were by no means an original invention of that time. They had led an uninterrupted existence since antiquity. It strikes one as an ironic twist of fate that a new-born society like the French nation of 1789 should choose as the outward expression of its freedom nothing better than the characteristic attribute of the Harlequin. Trousers were indeed an indispensable requisite for the male figure of the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Pantalone, Arlequino (before he adopted the patchwork costume), Brighella and the others anticipated the modern businessman's suit several hundred years ago.

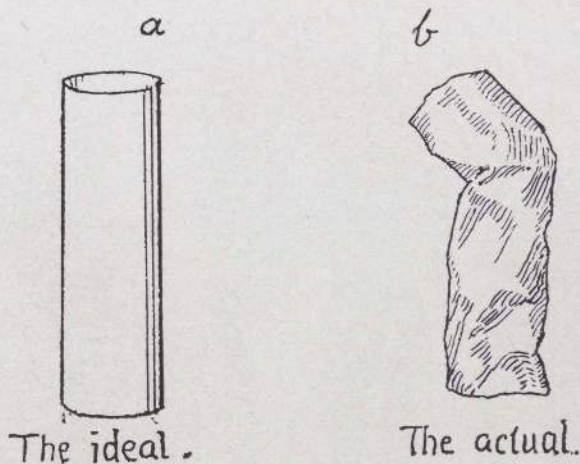
In our work-day dress there is little left of the gayety of comedy. Harlequin's costume was white—the businessman's is dark or dirty-colored; it has, however, preserved the original absurdity of the clown's costume. The picturesque female fashions of the nineteenth century changed by turns, while man in his Jumping Jack suit was biding his time. Shortly before the turn of the century,



discussions on the unsatisfactory garments of men were the order of the day. These grievances from the year 1893 have lost little of their actuality; the arguments are still applicable today.

"Whether tailoring suggested the merits of the tube to engineers as affording the highest degree of rigidity with a given amount of material, or whether engineering suggested it to tailors, must be left to the investigations of the careful historian. One thing is certain, that as the superior rigidity of the tube became generally recognized it was applied to every part of man's dress with a consistency and perseverance worthy of a better cause.

"There are two ways in which dress may harmonize with the form it clothes. It may be loose so that it flows freely over the limbs, or it may fit the limbs closely. The tube excludes both these sources of beauty. It is not full enough to take any folds of its own, but it is just full enough to miss all the lines



of the figure. And this dismal, tasteless, graceless type of form has allied itself to an equally dismal, tasteless, lifeless type of color. We have become so inured to this state of things that we regard it as normal, and fancy any infusion of grace or color into our dress would be phantastic and unbusiness-like, forgetting that there have been good men of business in Venice, Florence, in the Netherlands, etc., who did not find dingy suits of battered tubes essential to success in their mercantile pursuits; forgetting that never till this century was so degraded a type of dress worn anywhere, and now only in 'civilized' Europe, America, and their colonies."<sup>60</sup>

This was written more than fifty years ago, at a time which knew of no modern vehicles. Its carriages and air-balloons would cause hilarity today were they used for practical purposes, but one could wear a man's suit of two generations ago without attracting attention. The tubular style is triumphant in the sixth generation; the obligation of wearing a trouser crease, which is technically and esthetically severing the character of the tubular principle was accepted without murmurs.

*The introduction of the trouser crease into the tubular system was only a half-measure since goose-stepping—which is the only way of safe-guarding the crease—was never made compulsory.*

## THE "CRÆSUS" Trousers Stretcher.

••••

Easily adjusted. Will make old trousers new and new trousers like Mr. George Alexander's.

May be packed in a hat-box and applied anywhere.

••••

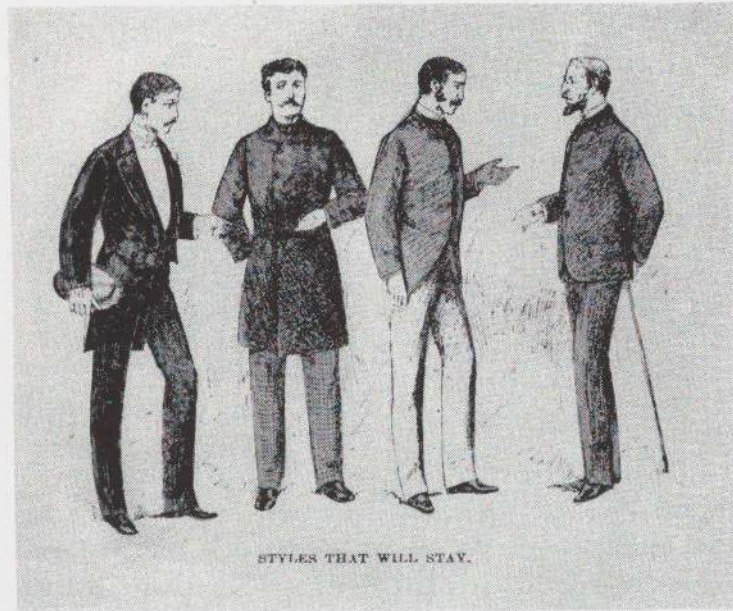
### The Invention of the Century.



"CHEER UP! YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT WHEN YOU GET A 'CRÆSUS!'"



For years, Americans proved to be the most docile subjects under the reign of insipid garments. It is true that protests were voiced from time to time; their importance lies not in the arguments presented but in permitting us to gain insight into the public state of mind. It is unnecessary to say that the diagnosis is disheartening. An incident illustrates the situation clearly: A periodical dared publish one sporadic attack on men's clothing, though this outburst was quite good-natured and humorous. The discussion wound up with a reply by the publisher of the magazine. His words are informative enough to be quoted. "I say without any fear of contradiction: as we know men's wear today it is the most comfortable in the history of the world and the best looking . . ."61 To give infallibility to such a statement, the publisher added to his signature *Men's Clothing Retailing*. Therewith the issue was settled, apparently to everybody's satisfaction.



From *Walker, Dress: as it has been, is, and will be. 1885.*



## *Sartoriosis, or the enjoyment of discomfort*

Any speculation on the future of dress will have to take into consideration what is perhaps the most prominent single characteristic of clothing—discomfort. No doubt, Elizabethans defended vehemently their right to wear a millstone of starched lace around their necks. And many gentlemen still justify their stiff collars, without which they would feel spiritually naked. Women believe in having a body structure different from men which, they insist, has to be compressed into a box of metal, bone or rubber. With equal ignorance they produce arguments for propping up their feet on artificial heels. Granted that all the perversions of apparel contain part of that factor of erotic lure and competition which is necessary for the propagation of the species, there appears to be a more immediate appeal which accounts for the silent endurance of fashion's infamies.

In his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton observed that "the greatest provocations of lust are from our apparel."<sup>62</sup> Scientific inquiries not only proved the correctness of Burton's argument, but also disclosed that such provocations are eagerly sought. Voluptuousness derived from wearing apparel has always been easily attainable to everybody. Besides, it is never avowed or even discussed.

Any mention of the sexual factor implicit in the enjoyment of clothes is probably suppressed today because the emotions caused by the articles we wear are not particularly healthy. Almost without exception, our voluptuous sartorial emotions originate in discomfort and even pain. The instruments of discomfort—the collars and shirtfronts, girdles and corsets, high-heeled shoes and narrow skirts—are essential parts of our wardrobe. To be sure, the bigotted fashion addict probably never thinks of them as tools of a perverted self-gratification. And to counteract even a suggestion that there might be some kind of lewdness involved in apparel enjoyment, civic morale has assured the permanent survival of these articles by investing them with symbolic significance—wisely enough, with the meaning of respectability and chastity.



*Corliss* Collars  
will sell to  
women of taste  
and refinement.



SPECIAL B 2 5-8 IN  
" C 1 7-8 IN  
NO 376 1 3-6 IN

They cost you  
\$1.10 per dozen.



VIRGINIA 2 3-4 IN  
ALENA 2 3-4 IN  
EULA 2 1-4 IN  
ZETA 1 7-8 IN  
DRO 1 3-5 IN

They sell at  
15c.; 2 for 25c.



IRMA 2 1-4 IN  
INEZ 2 -- IN

There's a style to suit every  
individual desire.  
Send for our latest booklet—  
"A STUDY IN WHITE."

Corliss, Coon & Co.

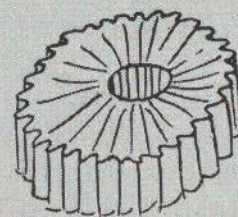
29 Union Square West,  
New York.

Troy, New York.  
Boston: 20 Chauncy Street.  
Chicago: 258 Franklin Street.

If the success of a fad or custom depends on the appeasement of instincts, then we should entertain no doubt that masochistic tendencies in clothing are much stronger than is generally admitted. The individual whose mind is molded under the pressure of urban or suburban environment with its lack of privacy, its noises and nuisances, develops an insensitivity which cushions the impact of the offense. Religion also, because it already contains all the elements of self-denial and self-torment, is no less favorable to such state of mind.

It is very rare to find people who acknowledge that they obtain pleasurable sensations from types of smothering clothing; the subject is carefully avoided in conversation. Only since we have a science which records these seemingly unimportant facts are we aware of their existence. It is no wonder that such knowledge is undesirable to many interests. The analytical investigations into our souls were forbidden in dictatorial countries. The producer of apparel—upon whom we ourselves have bestowed many dictatorial powers—likewise dreads the revelation of certain forces on the exploitation of which his business thrives.

Psychologists are familiar with the autoerotic mechanism of body constriction. The masochistic tendencies which have been discovered in wearing exceedingly narrow waist-bands, belts, jackets and bodices, are twofold: to derive pleasure directly from the pain of constriction, but also to enjoy the want of freedom.<sup>63</sup> Restriction of body movement, be it the hampering of free action of the limbs, or the bundling-up of the trunk, was early recognized—perhaps only unconsciously—as an essential quality in ceremonial dress. The hieratic costumes of the past, the ecclesiastical robes and military uniforms of our time, are built around the principle of tightness or restriction of movement. Both measures produce an intensification of personal awareness. The tension of muscles and nerves, due to the clothing apparatus, reflects itself in a change of behaviour. The outstanding example of that personal transformation is the military style of machine-like motion. The standing at "attention"—of which there is no parallel in the animal kingdom with its sharper faculties of real attention—or the more inexplicable goose-stepping and the drill of chorus girls are but expressions of the same phenomenon.



*Elizabethan Flattery*

It's the famous Elizabethan ruff and it's the most wonderful frame for your face. You'll love it on one of our couture wools . . . from an important winter collection in our misses' dresses on the third floor.

Above: Advertisement from *Dry Goods Economist*, 1901.

At right: From a newspaper advertisement, 1945.

Courtesy B. Altman & Co.



From New York World Telegram, 1944.

## Necktie Revolt Ties Up Chicago Bus Stations

By the United Press.

CHICAGO, July 3.—A dispute over whether a ticket seller should wear a necktie spread today, tied up business at three bus stations and gave the U. S. Labor Conciliation Department a problem as knotty as a bow tie.

E. R. McDonald of the Department of Labor's conciliation service summoned the disputants to a meeting to untangle the necktie problem, which arose when the company operating the Union Bus Terminal told 14 ticket sellers they must wear ties while at work.

The ticket sellers declined to put on their ties and the company refused to let them work in open-throated comfort. The ticket sellers, affiliated with the Brother-

hood of Railway Clerks, said they had been locked out.

Other employees of the main bus terminal and two substations walked out in sympathy with the tieless ticket men. Lines were formed by pickets, nearly all of whom wore neckties.

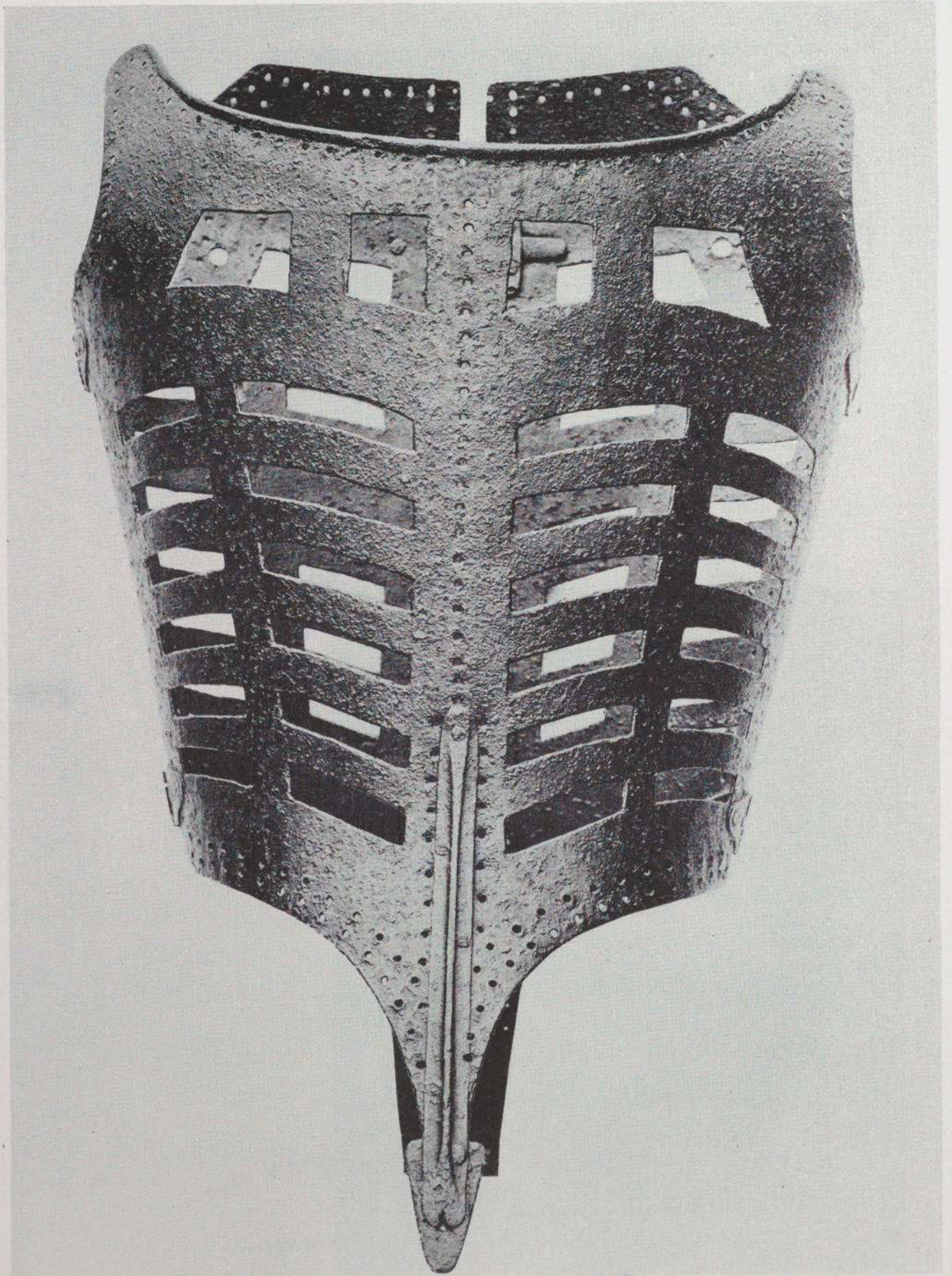
Bus service, crammed with July 4th business, continued, but riders climbed into the busses at the curb and rode free to points outside of Chicago, where they bought their tickets.

One traveler said the tie dispute had tied him up for 24 hours. A woman traveling from Phoenix, Ariz., to Madison, Wis., with four small children and five suitcases searched the station in vain for a porter, with or without a necktie.



Millstone collar.  
Painting by Hals.





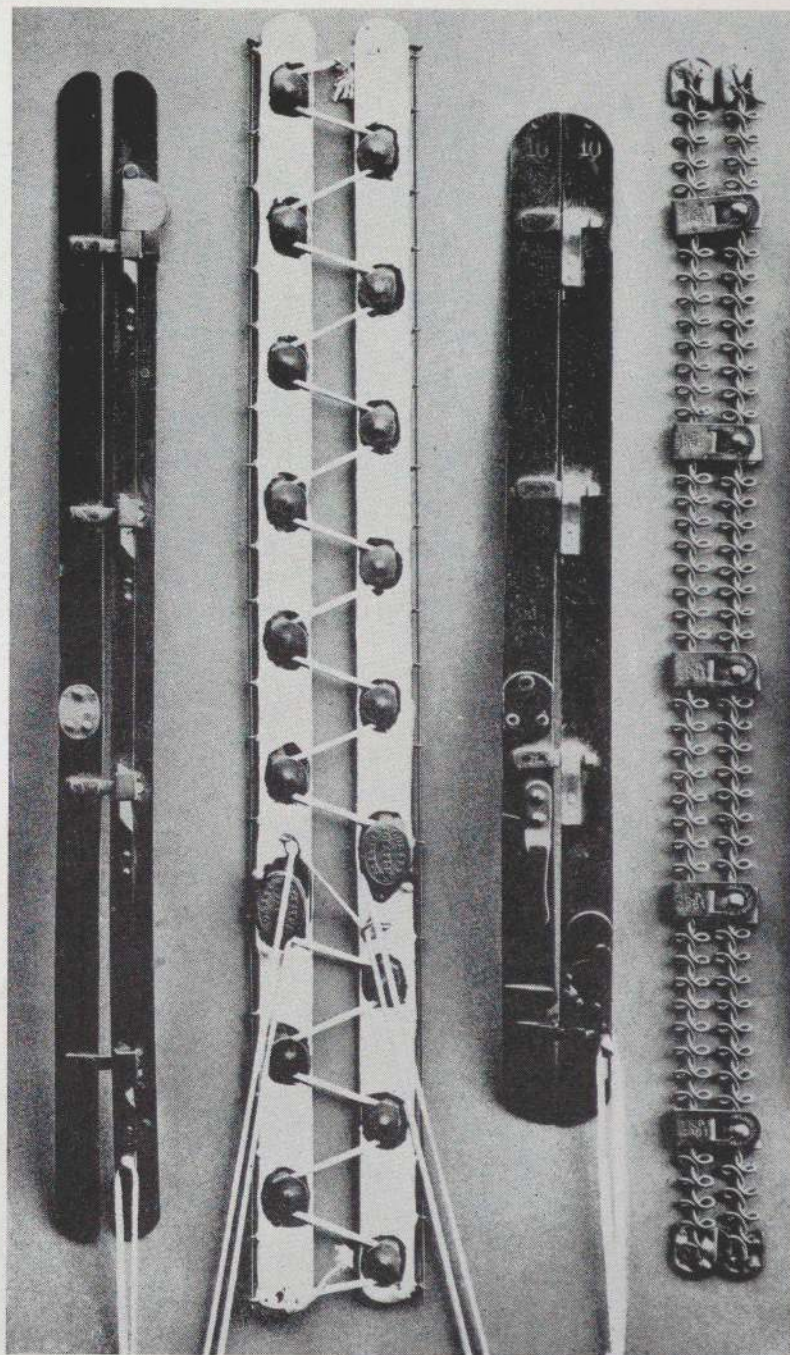


"Tight lacing," wrote an author on matrimony more than a hundred years ago, "kindles impure desires." Modern psychology has confirmed the relationship between body constriction and incontinence.

At right: Corset hardware, nineteenth century.

On opposite page: Iron corset, end of sixteenth century. Museum of Cluny.

Both illustrations from *Libron et Clouzot, Le corset dans l'art et les moeurs.*



As long as people derive satisfaction from strait-jackets, the discomfort of our dress will be assured, if only in the civilian equivalent of the soldier's uniform. "We believe that there may be such a thing as an anal-sadistic type of clothing which would be characterized by its tight fit, general stiffness and lack of comfort and something military in character. For a number of years, women masochists, particularly, subjected themselves to the tortures of the now happily extinct corset as they still do to the extremely high heeled shoes."<sup>65</sup> This quotation is not from a psycho-analyst, it is the opinion of a student of costume. Parenthetically, we might add that the corset is not gone irrevocably; it survives in a kind of chrysalis, from which it may emerge in its perfect cruelty at a moment propitious for its resurrection.



Skin eroticism derived from the texture of clothes belongs to the same category of pleasurable experiences. The sensorial provocations of certain materials is well known; silk, velvet, corduroy or fur rouse different sensations, each of which in turn convey distinct associations. Often, such materials become fetishes. We may rightly suspect that the "hairy garments" worn for self-punishment, provided penitents with a number of delightful experiences. "Camlet, hair cloth, and articles of wool or hair" observes one writer, "with which certain pious individuals have clothed themselves, have often contributed, with certain disciplines, to induce incontinence."<sup>66</sup>

But ever since the erotic life of the infant was brought to our attention, we have become inclined to seek explanation for the psychological puzzles of adults in the earlier periods of life. Psychologists have traced masochistic pleasures to the baby's unsuccessful efforts to break the ties of his swaddling clothes. In any case, such evidence was volunteered by patients.<sup>67</sup>



*How pleasant it would be to think that these women were able to wheel around like toys! Unfortunately, though their legs never showed and were unmentionable, they had to be depended on for walking.*

*"Front and back of Belted Habit Basque and Combination Skirt." American, 1878.*





*American children's dresses, 1856.*

*From the Picture Collection of the New York Public Library.*

"While in men it is possible to trace a tendency to inflict pain, or the simulacrum of pain, on the women they love, it is still easier to trace in women a delight in experiencing physical pain when inflicted by a lover, and an eagerness to accept subjection to his will. Such a tendency is normal."<sup>68</sup> The tools which masculine ingenuity contrived to castigate her or to reduce her to a state of semi-captivity merit special interest, as a great deal of woman's attractiveness is attributed to her feigned or actual helplessness. The sheath-like skirt, the shaky contraptions of stilts and heels, the torturous boxes for the feet, have a long history. All these gadgets enjoy a fashionable existence in our days, and men and women leave little doubt that they derive an incomparable satisfaction from their use.

If we want to understand the erotic fascination of the artificially restricted walk of women, we have to make a short historical digression. Books on costume or fashion omit this delicate matter—perhaps mainly because the authors are seldom cognizant of the subject.

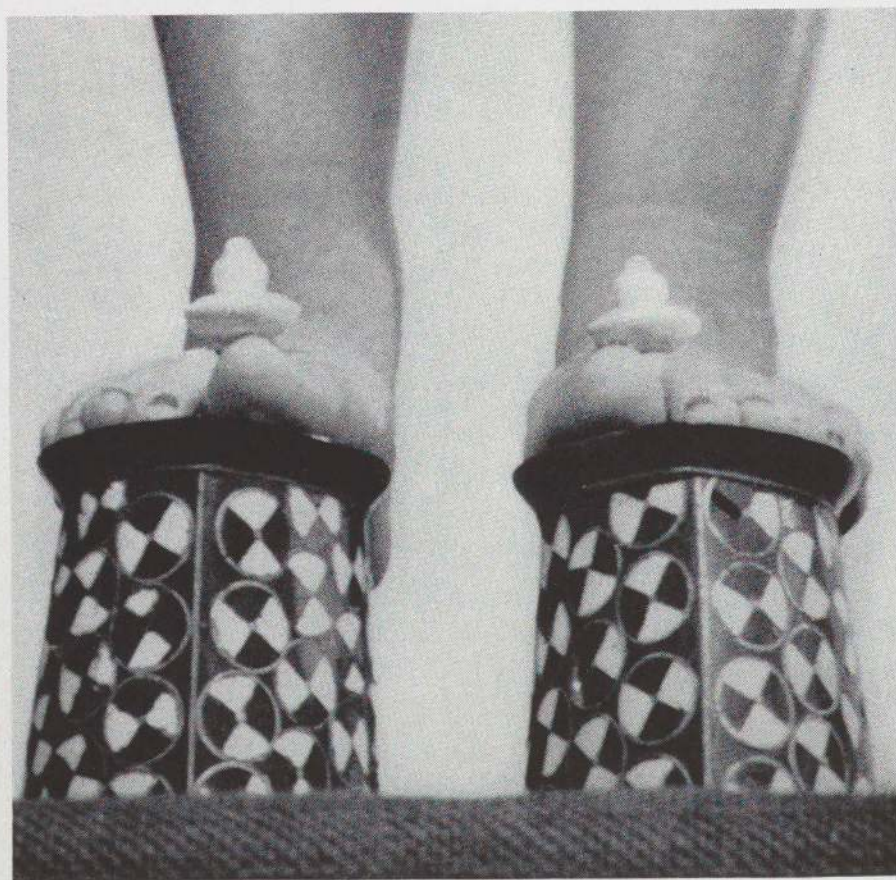
Although our way of life in general reflects a rather consistent occidental philosophy, our notions of an attractive female walk betray an oriental mentality. Restraint from fully using one's extremities is still believed to be a sign of daintiness, and short steps are most persistently associated with modesty. This holds true for women only. The exception to the rule, the encumbering ceremonial robes of priests which in our eyes lend a good deal of dignity to the wearers, have conserved their female quality, since the priest's garment is the symbol of his renouncement of virility.



In forcing women to take small steps, man conceived many artful devices. He made them wear the narrowest of wrappings; he weighed their feet down with heavy ornaments or put them on ill-balanced pedestals. But never was the restraint in woman's walking so highly cultivated than through foot ornaments used in biblical time.

Palestine's contribution to body restriction is apparent in the stepping chains mentioned in Talmudic literature. These curious ornaments were more or less elaborately designed chains which joined the ankles together and, according to the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, "obliged the wearers to take short and tripping steps."<sup>69</sup> To increase the effect, and to attract attention, little bells were attached to the chain or to the ankles. Unlike other ornamental jewelry, these chains seem to have been well hidden by long garments, and their restraining presence was noticeable only by the hobbling gait of the wearer, and by the ding-dong of the bells. We have to admire the resourcefulness that set the spectacle of a provoking gait to musical accompaniment.

*Heavy stilted Arabian sandals, held to the foot by only a knob.*

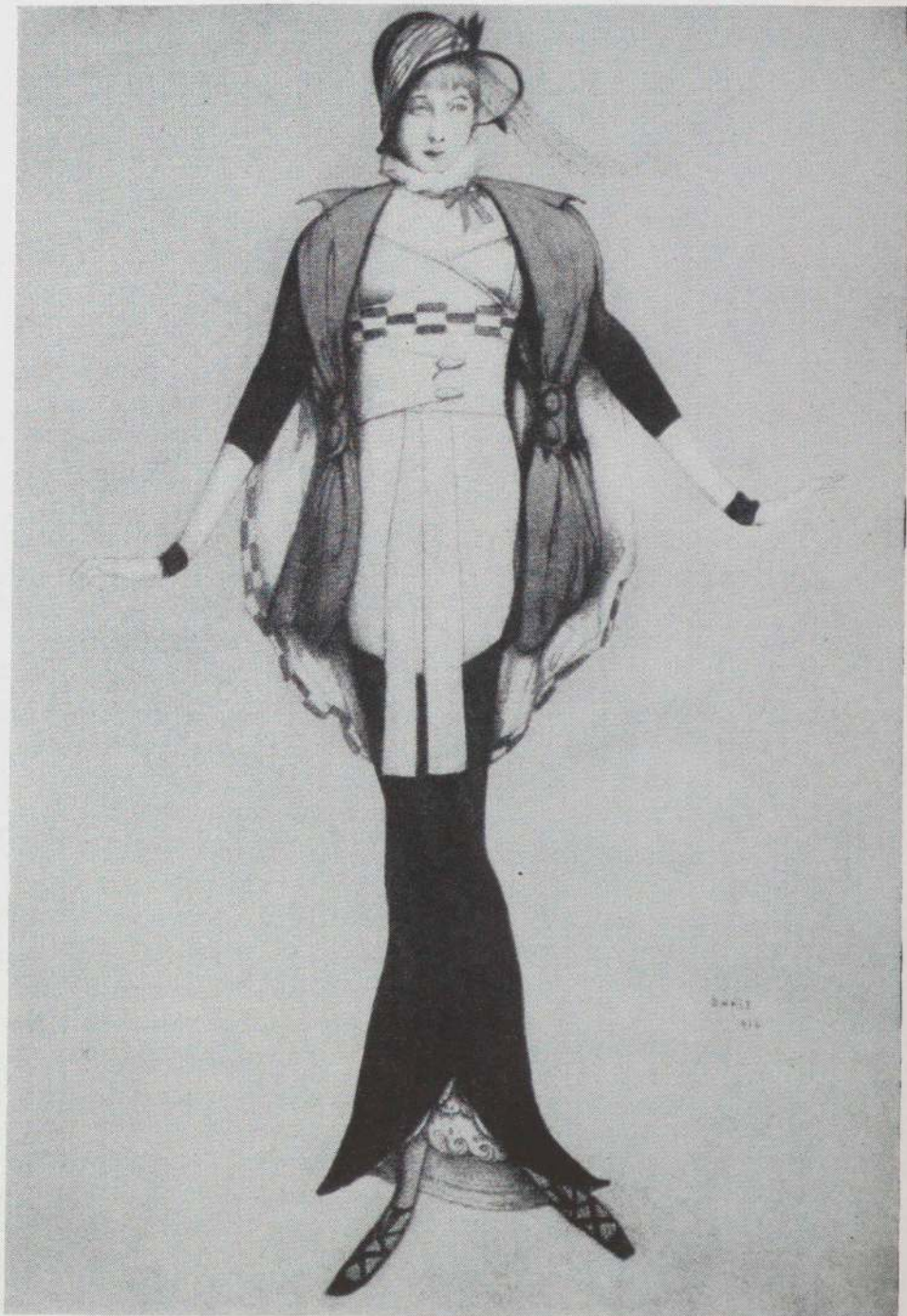


Sutro





*Cartoon on the hobble-skirt. Roller-skates and a draught-dog are depicted as the only means of locomotion for a woman hobbled in the fashion of the day. From Ulk, 1910.*



*Drawing by Bakst, dated 1912. Although the handcuffs are only vestigial, the restriction of the hobble skirt, joining the legs at the knees, is very real. From Fischel, Chronisten der Mode.*



Isaiah criticized Jewish women for their foot ornaments and the affected walk they caused—"walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet." Being a prophet by profession, he at once offered a forecast on the decline of women's finery: "The Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, and the cauls, and the crescents; the pendants, and the bracelets, and the mufflers; the headties, and the ankle chains."<sup>70</sup> The Koran sounds a similar note. Alluding to the anklets which also Arab women used to wear, it says: "Let them not make a noise with their feet, that the ornaments which they hide may thereby be discovered."<sup>71</sup>

It seems that whenever the charms of the body are most jealously hidden, erotic phantasy concentrates on gesture and walk. Scholarly dissertations were written about the origin and significance of these ankle-letters. Though their use was condemned by moralists and moralizers, their continued popularity was insured by the easiness with which they could be incorporated into the code of respectability. Indeed, they fitted smoothly the demands of modesty and distinction. Even modern writers attribute to them an increased dignity such as "a short, genteel step,"<sup>72</sup> "a secure and precise pace."<sup>73</sup> Others go so far as to identify the wearing of stepping-chains with chastity. One rabbi informs us that well-to-do Hebrew parents, perhaps in imitating an Arabic custom, chained the ankles—according to other sources, also the knees—of their marriageable daughters. He confesses, however, that he is not convinced of the usefulness of this practice.<sup>74</sup>

Bridal chains seem to have been actually ceremonial ornaments for many centuries. In 1646, a visitor to the Holy Land, describing the ceremony of marriage, mentions among the bride's apparel silver handcuffs and anklecuffs.<sup>75</sup> Such ornaments were also worn in other oriental countries. In Russell's book on the Barbary States, written hardly more than one hundred years ago, the betrothed Tunisian girl is isolated for fattening purposes while "shackles of gold and silver are put upon her ankles and wrists, as a piece of dress."<sup>76</sup>

Central African fashions prove that the egotism of the savage is not inferior to that of the civilized. One anthropologist reports that "the wives of some of the wealthy are often laden with iron to such a degree that, without exaggeration, I have seen several carrying about them close upon half a hundredweight of these savage ornaments. The heavy rings with which the women load their wrists and ankles, clank and resound like the fetters of slaves. Free from any other domination, it is remarkable of this people how, nevertheless, they are not free from the fetters of fashion."<sup>77</sup>

An author on bodily adornment relates the case of Malayan brides who are decked with ornaments so heavily that they are reduced to immobility during the fortnight of wedding ceremonies.<sup>78</sup> Though he regards such helplessness as the symbol of their subjugation to the bridegroom, he also points to the dignity of slow and heavy walk thus acquired, caused by the pendants and





*These Arabian sandals from the Traphagen collection are veritable pedestals for setting off a pair of unimpaired feet. The heavy soles are lifted by gripping the toe post. Since their surface is perfectly horizontal, these sandals have none of the disadvantages of heeled footwear.*

*The anklets weigh a pound and a half each. According to Mrs. Traphagen, "they were originally a symbol of slavery, and connected by a short chain made running impossible. Through the silversmith's cooperation they evolved into fashionable adornments, and finally became emblems of rank."*



impediments, which adds esthetic quality to the adorned woman.\* It is beside the point to explore which motive—the addition of ornament or the change of gait—is predominant; in the case of the modern high heel, the shaky walk and the stilted shoe have come to be regarded as inseparable.

Bridal chains probably came into fashion at the time when a wife was obtained by theft or purchase—marriage by capture has been widely practiced in the Near Orient, and the Bible relates several instances of connubial capture.<sup>79</sup> The bridal bonds were religiously respected and their removal was the bridegroom's privilege. These ancient folkways receive contemporary meaning, strikingly and quite unexpectedly, by an advertisement in a 1944 issue of the magazine *Army Officer*: "No ordinary, casual gift is the P.O.L. Anklet—to be classed with less intimate or less personal gifts of jewelry. Its gleaming, cut-out, chain-locked letters proclaim to the world that—body and soul—the wearer is a Prisoner Of Love. It is intended truly to be presented by, and worn by, only those whose love for each other is imprisoned in each other's hearts . . . never to be removed, even momentarily—until you remove it."<sup>80</sup>

Modern bracelets and anklets are reminders of the time when these ornaments were bonds. The wide ankle-strap of many present-day shoes probably is an attempt at resurrecting the erotic charm which in ancient times was attributed to the anklet. Although the wearing of multiple arm- and wrist-rings is socially accepted, the dainty golden anklet, timidly displayed by school-girls and demi-mondaines, is considered a flagrant form of exhibitionism. This anklet is generally a token of affection from a male admirer; it is the illegitimate badge of bondage of which the legitimate form is the wedding ring. However, like the latter, the anklet may be classified as a monogamous ornament. No woman has yet dared to wear a collection of foot ornaments as did the hetaerae in more distant times.

The inclusion of the strange fetters among the paraphernalia of marriage ceremony—our wedding ring is the last remaining link of the chain of old—is another proof of their supposed dignity. The author of a three-volume opus *The Hebrew Woman at the Dressing Table and as a Bride* believes that the bride delighted in the tinkling of her silver and gold manacles as much as did her unchaste sisters.<sup>81</sup> The suggestive erotic quality of these ornaments suited admirably every station of life. According to the *Dictionary of the Bible*, "they were as common as bracelets and armlets."<sup>82</sup>

\* In her book "The Inner Life of Syria, Palestine, and the Holy Land" Isabel Burton, an American missionary's wife, recalls the ingenuity of Damascene women who found a way to satisfy their vanity without sacrifice of comfort. At a wedding party, Mrs. Burton noticed that "the best women dressed in a plain Cashmere robe of négligé shape, and wore no ornaments, but loaded all their riches on one or two of their slaves, as if to say, in school girls' parlance: 'Now girls, if you want to see my things, there they are . . .'"<sup>83</sup>

art. Wear the bracelets massed,  
three, five, seven-for-luck,  
until your arm positively sags  
under the weight. The six pieces  
sketched are planned as a nature

From a magazine advertisement, 1946.





*Handcuff jewelry, 1946. Manufacturer: Benedikt.*

*Reprinted from Charm magazine.*

*Street & Smith Publications, Inc. 1946.*

To the idea of modesty and dignity was added the mark of distinction,<sup>84</sup> more specifically, class distinction. A woman who refrained from walking, or, by virtue of her favorable pecuniary circumstances, was exempt from exercising her physical faculties, became to be considered a socially superior being. This viewpoint has remained unchanged to this day. "Thousands of women still prefer economic dependence," writes Elizabeth Hawes, "still prefer French heels, symbol of the woman who need not walk or stand, or is willing to wear a skirt so tight she cannot walk in it."<sup>85</sup> Snobbishness, out of its reverence for the idle, deducted even esthetic criteria from the restriction of movement that is imposed by some pieces of apparel.

It is nonetheless clear that all the playful elegancies of foot-fetters could not have guaranteed their survival, had it not been for a more elementary appeal; i.e., the "voluptuous emotions" which they released in men and women. Neither the humiliation endured in these bonds—we have only to consider that captives and animals were similarly hobbled—nor the infliction of physical passiveness can account for the continued existence of an obvious perversion. The elementary appeal of fetters has been diagnosed by Havelock Ellis as "an almost abstract sexual fascination in the idea of restraint, whether endured, inflicted, or merely witnessed or imagined; the feet become the chief focus of this fascination, and the basis on which a foot-fetishism or shoe-fetishism tends to arise, because restraint of the feet produces a more marked effect than restraint of the hands."<sup>86</sup>

Seventeen hundred years earlier, Clement of Alexandria, in his *Paedagogus*, pretty nearly expressed the same thoughts. Preaching against the excessive fondness for jewels and gold ornaments, the then fashionable chain anklets



drew from him this pious ejaculation: "What else is this coveted adorning of yourselves, O ladies, but the exhibiting of yourselves fettered? To me, those who voluntarily put themselves into bonds seem to glory in rich calamities."<sup>87</sup>

As has been said before, physical pain is accepted by woman if it is a constituent part of the pleasure of courtship. The discomfort from wearing any kind of hampering apparel is compensated by the collective admiration of the other sex. Woman's bird-like tripping is of age-old appeal to her mate. Modern woman will, therefore, furiously defend her high-heeled footwear and her stilted walk because the corruption of foot and walk constitutes—if only felt unconsciously—a focus of sexual attraction.

Men are perfectly frank in admitting that high-heeled shoes stimulate their sexual appetite. They seldom fail to express their predilection for them, and women, consequently, assign to stilted shoes all the magic of a love potion. Again, it is curious to find such oriental taste in a non-oriental race. The wearing of stilted shoes is an Eastern custom, and it was brought to Europe only a few hundred years ago. The port of entry was Venice.

A seventeenth century chronicler describes the feminine footwear of the time as vividly as any modern fashion reporter: "There is one thing used of the Venetian women, and some others dwelling in the cities and towns subject to the Signiory of Venice, that is not to be observed (I thinke) amongst any other women in Christendome; which is so common in Venice, that no woman whatsoever goeth without it, either in her house or abroad: a thing made of wood, and covered with leather of sundry colors, some with white, some redde, some yellow. It is called a Chapiney, which they weare under their shoes. Many of them are curiously painted; some also I have seene fairely gilt: so uncomely a thing (in my opinion) that it is pittie this foolish custom is not cleane banished and exterminated out of the citie. There are many of these Chapineys of a great height, even half a yard high, which maketh many of their women that are very short, seeme much taller than the tallest women we have in England. Also I have heard that this is observed amongst them, that by how much the nobler a woman is, by so much higher are her Chapineys. All their Gentlewomen, and most of their wives and widowes that are of any wealth, are assisted and supported eyther by men or women when they walke abroad, to the end they may not fall. They are borne up most commonly by the left arme, otherwise they might quickly take a fall. For I saw a women fall a very dangerous fall, as she was going down the stairs of one of the little stony bridges with her high chapineys alone by her selfe: but I did nothing pittie her, because shee wore such frivolous and (as I may truely terme them) ridiculous instruments, which were the occasion of her fall."<sup>88</sup>



*Venetian courtesan walking on chopines, assisted by two other women.*

*Water color by Gaignères, 1485.*

The chronicler was not aware that the foolish footwear had indeed been banned almost two hundred years earlier. In 1430, when chopines had reached the height of more than twenty inches, the Venetian government





*The chopine, a truly feminine article of clothing, was worn by women of leisure. It is obvious that it was not intended for walking, but rather to make walking impossible. Introduced from the Orient, where the stilted shoe was valued both as a symbol and instrument of woman's submission, the chopine spread from Venice all over Europe. So great was the attraction of this fashion that it survived for centuries, despite repeated interdictions by the authorities.*

*Venetian courtesan, wearing chopines.*

*From Bertelli, Diversarum Nationum Habitus, 1592.*





*A pair of chopines, measuring more than twenty inches in height.  
Museo Civico in Venice.*

prohibited the fashion. The fathers of the Republic had noticed its potential dangers, considering that pregnant women who stumbled would be in a sad plight, giving birth to *filios abortivos in perditione corporis e animae suae*.<sup>89</sup>

But the chopine stayed on. It was instrumental in changing proportion, posture and gait of the outward appearance of woman, and in the light of history we may consider it a most significant advent in Western Costume. Up to then, occidental men and women had been on equal footing; allowing for the variety of steps and paces, their carriage had remained direct and natural as that of an animal. With the chopine, the Orient gained a foothold on European costume which it would not yield.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth century the stilted shoe seems to have been dominant as the footwear of ladies of leisure.<sup>90</sup> A visitor to the court of Madrid tells us that the Queen of Spain, wife of Philip V, had to rely on the support of two pages when she walked on her *chapins*.<sup>91</sup> Brantôme in his *Vie des Dames Galantes* mentions the clogs made of cork, worn by French ladies, some of which reached the height of two feet. It is clear that women of short stature delighted in their use, all the more as the long skirts hid those contraptions.

Stilts were known in oriental antiquity; they never quite disappeared in Mohammedan countries. But at all times were they applied to women only.\* The excessive height and weight—some of them are more in the character of furniture rather than apparel,—the weird elongation of the whole figure, transformed the wearer in a strange domestic animal hovering high above the floor. Whatever interpretations observers volunteered to give for the obstinate continuance of the custom, its uninterrupted survival was proof enough for its pleasing effects. The fascination which elevation seems to cause has not subsided. The clumsy constructions of the Damascene and Venetian pedestals have given way to the more streamlined pegs called French heels.

Again, as in the case of ankle-chains and anklets, the erotic element in footwear is heightened by association with marriage customs. The Syrian *kubkabs*—this onomatopoeic name applies to the clogs from which the Venetian stilts descend—are made of a special height for the use of brides.<sup>92</sup> Among the Hebrews, the gifts for the bride were and still continue to be shoes. "In handing the shoe to the bride the bridegroom considers himself as her conquerer."<sup>93</sup> An identical view was shared by the Germans; the bridegroom regarded the bride as his property the moment she accepted and put on the shoes he had given her. Presenting of shoes was equally common among Slav and Latin peoples; among English-speaking nations, slipper-throwing after newly-weds is a survival of the original custom.

The untying of the bride's shoes, a widely spread marriage custom, has the

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\* The exception from this rule are the bathing sandals worn for protection by women and men in floor-heated Oriental bathing establishments.



same meaning as the untying of the girdle or the breaking of the bridal garland.<sup>94</sup> Taking off one's shoes symbolizes nakedness in folklore.<sup>95</sup> The Catholic Church agrees strongly on this point—worshippers are requested to cover their feet. Interpretations of this curious viewpoint are sometimes contained in the writings of the fathers of the Church. Clement of Alexandria, who condemned the comfortable and “mischievous devices of sandals,” urged women to wear shoes, “for it is not suitable for the foot to be shown naked.”\* He continues, however, that “for a man bare feet are quite in keeping, for being shod is near neighbor to being bound.”<sup>96</sup> Rarely do we find such an unequivocal admission: Women's feet are different from man's; they are dangerous to man's spiritual welfare and should be castigated by being bound into shoes.

Fettering of woman is of universal appeal. The husband's desire to secure his wife physically to himself is among his strongest instincts. In earlier times, the stolen or purchased wife would become either a work-wife or a love-wife.\*\*<sup>97</sup> If she was merely to be his servant, the husband most probably did not think of putting obstacles to her efficiency. The idle mate, as distinct from the worker, marked a degree of refinement. To insure her submission, he put her into harness—animal fashion. In the Orient the husband believed he could insure his wife's fidelity by obstructing her walk. The Christian gentleman, once his jealousy was aroused, found even more diabolical devices. The infamous chastity belt of the crusaders is anything but a legend. As late as in the eighteen-eighties, chastity belts were publicly advertised in France.<sup>98</sup> The forms of submission have become milder with the increasing strength of our civilization's codes and taboos. But the intensity of male egotism has hardly diminished.

The utility principle that guides modern life makes little or no distinction between the industrious and the languid female type; modern woman has to work on a schedule of alternately impersonating the assiduous and the seductive. While ordinarily she may depend for locomotion on “walking shoes,” she is not regarded seductive without having surrendered her freedom of walking. The columnist of a reliable periodical, referring to a shoe manufacturer, writes: “M. who doesn't think that woman should do any walking at all later in the day, has produced Naked Genius, which is my idea of a sumptuous cocktail and dinner shoe.”<sup>99</sup> The American shoe manufacturer's

\* This viewpoint has persisted far into modern times. Only mythological deities, pagan and biblical personalities were portrayed unshod, and the shepherdesses of rococo art displayed their sandalled feet as a badge of libertinism. Havelock Ellis recorded that “an English actress regarded as a calumny the statement that she appeared on the stage bare-foot, and brought an action for libel winning substantial damages.”<sup>100</sup>

\*\* The position of man and woman was occasionally reversed. In ancient Egypt, for instance, men tended the domestic affairs, reared the children and owed obedience to their wives.



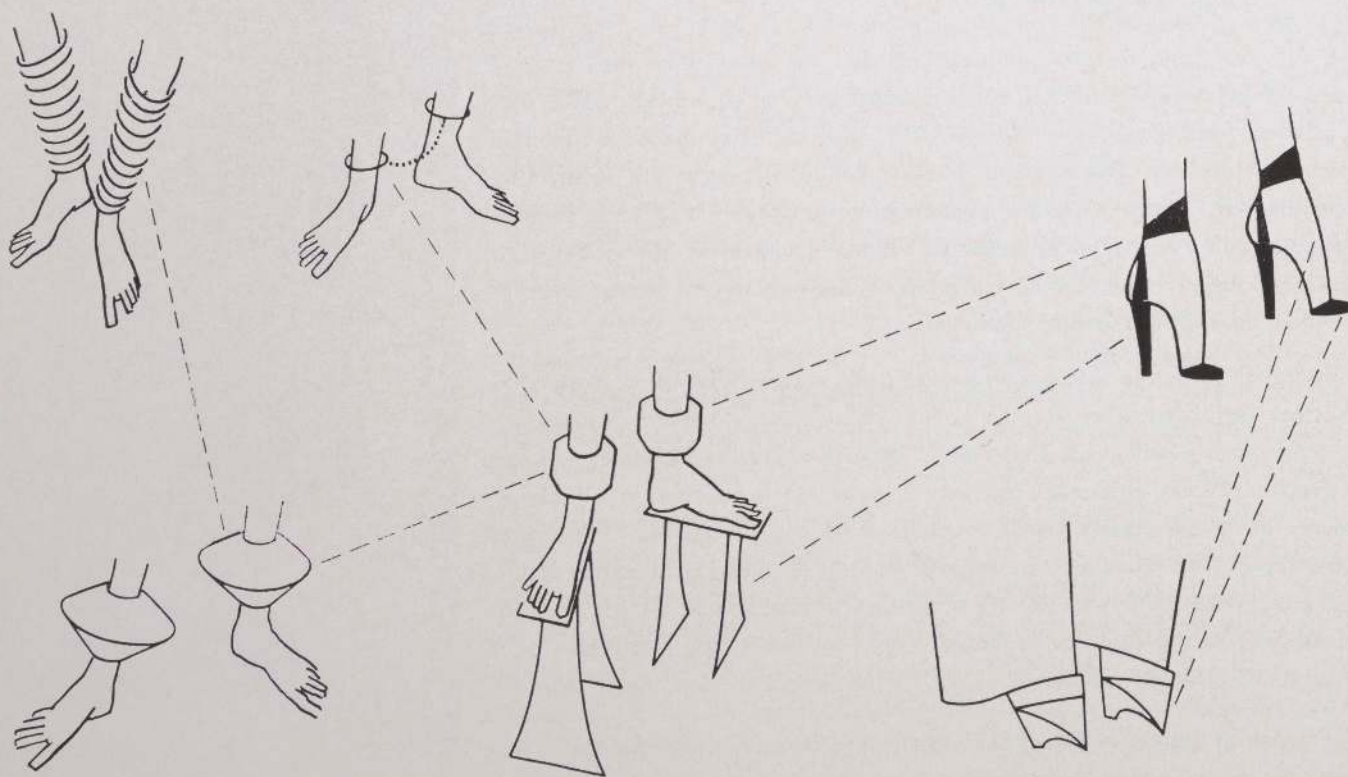
Syrian bride wearing kubkabs of special height.

From *Géographie*, 1939.



idea is quite consistent with the Oriental tradition of foot perversion. And it seems that women not only fail to deplore such infliction but welcome the absurdity of man's taste to enlarge their stock of coquettishness.

The metamorphosis of the successful woman-aviator or woman-executive from a powerful personality into a cooing odalisque, cannot, it seems, be satisfactorily accomplished without recourse to high-heeled shoes. By depriving her of a secure walk, she becomes, all at once, an irresistible female. "The cheeks shake, the breasts shake, the body lumbers and hops"<sup>101</sup>—the jutting abdomen, the staccato tripping, it is all delightfully feminine. Both, the physiological and psychological effects of modern walking contraptions are more or less the same as those of the oriental foot-stools.



*Contrary to what might seem to be the eminent seductive qualities of woman—her primary and secondary sexual characteristics—it is female bearing that attracts man most. Since the anatomical difference between man and woman does not produce different ways of walking, a specific feminine gait has been artificially engineered with the help of various and often ingenious implements. Extreme weight and height and, more recently, non-essential heels were added to a woman's shoe in order to throw her body out of balance.*



A compilation of the perversions of the female gait would be incomplete without mentioning toe-dancing of the classical ballet. Toe-dancing cannot be performed barefoot; the dancer depends on a special type of footwear, the ballet slipper.\* In moving on the tips of her toes, the dancer deprives herself of the advantages that are inherent in having feet—the base provided by the sole of the foot, the five toes which enable her to grip the ground, the springiness of her foot skeleton. In the *pointe* the foot is stiffened to a solid clump and years of painstaking preparation—reminiscent of the years that went into foot-binding of Chinese girls—are necessary to dislocate the instep. The resemblance to Chinese Golden Lilies is indeed striking—also the Chinese ideal demanded that instep and shin-bone form one straight line. Again, the modern high-heeled foot is construed on the same esthetic principle. Toe-dancing, if such an euphemism must be applied to what at best appears to be fidgeting about on the stumps of one's feet, nonetheless affords the ballet-habitue such rapturous delights as did the sight of tripping Chinese women to the Chinaman. "Even in the fresh brise," observes a traveler in China, "without the aid of a walking stick, and hampered by an open and rather big umbrella, they made good progress. While running after their small children they kept balance with their arms outstretched and reminded me of hens, half-flying and half running." "Their gait," he continues, "is comparable to the mincing steps of Frenchwomen."<sup>102</sup>

The cleavage between art and life with its resulting confusion is also exemplified in the absurd ideas of the female anatomy. The pious efforts of art museums and art critics to make our art appreciation less hypocritical are bound to fail as long as we are unwilling to reconcile our work-a-day emotions and our museum's emotions. Admiration for art never did deter men from desiring women with insects' waists. Our present relationship to art is almost purely sentimental. The current type of ultimate perfection of corporeal beauty reveals our inconsistency. A babyish face that contrasts strangely with a more than fair bosom (which is often merely a sartorial illusion of the potentialities of a professional wet-nurse), a prominent abdomen propped up on legs with excessive bulges at calf and instep—the female body is a curiously mixed assortment of characteristics which belong to infantilism, fecundity and depravity. Moreover, this composite beauty ideal is held beyond the shadow of a doubt to be the very image of unspoiled anatomy. But then, we must recall that the mark of the corset was in its time credited with being a normal condition of every female torso.

Discomfort, though it may be felt with different reactions, is nonetheless very real and, above all, visible. Our clothes, masculine and feminine, leave their imprint on the skin. Garter, brassiere, girdle and waist-band make red marks on shoulders and waists; the shoes cut into the instep and chafe the toes. Man's throttling collars and neckties belong into the same category of

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\* *Professional ballet shoes must not be confused with what has lately been sold in shoe stores as "ballet slippers."*



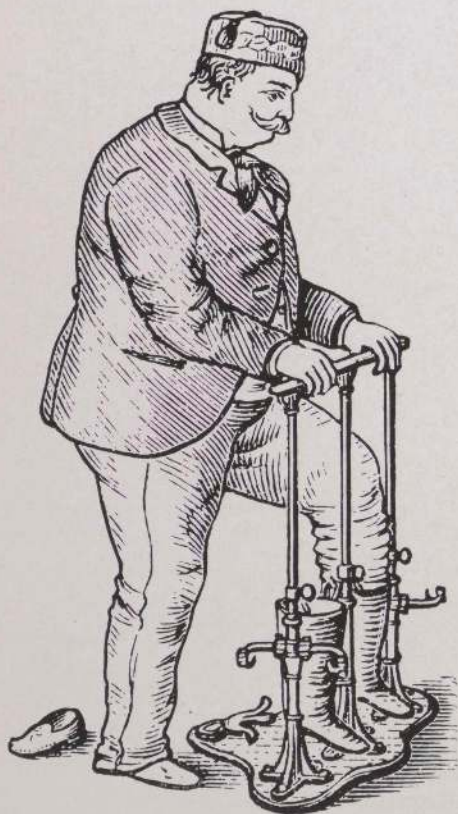
torturous implements. Yet, no dealer had ever difficulty selling them; they are the pride of the dependable citizen.

Women, who as a rule do not waste much critical thought on their outfits, will either memorize the sermons of their favorite fashion commentators or confess guilelessly that they need to tie their wobbly bodies in order to secure a shape or the semblance of a shape. Pains and bruises, they believe, are inevitable—perhaps, there also lingers the consoling thought in their minds that their mothers willingly endured much greater castigations. In men, the penitent attitude is still stronger. "A good many men, it would appear, enjoy the stiffness of the starched collar, feel greatly strengthened thereby, and suffer a corresponding sense of inferiority when discovered collarless or with a crumpled collar."<sup>103</sup> Masochistic inclinations alone, which vary greatly with each individual, cannot explain the continued custom of neck binding. The uncovered throat is held to be a feminine privilege. The collarless man is not seldom suspected of perverted tendencies, though the flowery house gown, apparently, never reflected on a man's virility.

It follows that the fear of breaking a habit, or of being different from the horde, is a major obstacle in the way of change. Non-conformity with established customs causes profound resentment among the majority of people. Their disdain has to be feared by the individual who depends on the community. Disrespect of seemingly minor dress customs equals criticism of social laws; the sceptic loses thus the confidence of his fellow-citizens and is dismissed as unreliable. It is irrelevant whether censorship is exercised by a central authority which may impose the death sentence for disobedience with its dress regulations, or whether the convention is held up by the people's consent. Conventional manners of living enjoy an immunity from criticism comparable to that of the most absolute potentate; the punishment conferred upon the transgressor is ostracism, which equals decline in one's social and economic standing.

Why, then, do we hesitate to say that the function of clothing, besides covering our shame and reducing the cold and intensifying the heat, is also to be disagreeable? Why do we pay our doctors for keeping us alive, when we do not exercise enough ingenuity to make life more pleasant? Why do we spoil the pleasure of eating by putting on the most absurd body coverings such as formal dress? Why do we install expensive gadgets like air cooling in our houses when relief can be had by taking off our coats and neckties? Why do we talk at all about efficiency in pleasant living when we cannot or do not want to come to terms with the problem of clothes which affect living constantly?

People often do the right thing clandestinely or unconsciously. Women slip off their shoes when the situation is favorable, that is, in dark or dimmed places such as theatres or restaurants, trains and libraries. Men have been seen imitating them. Such license is, no doubt, misconduct, hence its secrecy. Should a person take off his or her shoes or tie in polite company, the action



*Boot remover.*

*Newspaper advertisement.*

*End of nineteenth century.*



could not be interpreted other than irresponsible, immodest, or contemptuous. The more obvious explanation of defense against the tyranny of bad clothing is not accepted. The complicated code of behaviour serves, if not to stop, at least to delay any development towards personal comfort. Clothes are the badge of admittance to the community, and not just a cover for our bareness. The kind of clothes we seem to cherish most are in a good measure designed to punish and damage our bodies. The gentleman who "does not feel like a proper man" without a stiff collar becomes, through the strangling effect of his neckwear, purified and redeemed. Not only providing him with personal discomfort, the pressure on his thyroid cartilage generates a feeling of moral well-being.

It couldn't be any other way. Every social gathering of importance achieves noble bearing and noble mindedness by the purely mechanical device of stiff clothes. The all-importance of this sartorial precaution is brought home by strict dress laws which deny a comfortably attired person access to the tribal rituals called "formal occasions."

Our unavowed craving for discomfort with intermittent fits of despair, our inability to rationalize clothes, in short, our utter helplessness in tackling a matter which is of paramount importance to health and happiness, is a major puzzle to which the answer is best known to psychologists and anthropologists. It appears that the civilized individual is no less a fetish worshipper than the savage; both observe a rigid ceremonial in dress and body decoration; both recognize tribal taboos in dress; and both are pretty ignorant of the motives that underlie their behaviour. Primitive and civilized clothing is interlarded with symbols of sexual significance, and they are not very subtle either. The story of Rhodopis-Cinderella is the parable of the erotic proficiency of woman.<sup>104</sup> The dainty shoe symbolizes the vulva; in the instance of the minute Chinese foot, this relationship is not merely symbolical but anatomical. Though people are very much in the dark as to its true significance, the erotic fascination of the small foot does not wear off.

The symbols of virility, of which the male costume is full, are only unconsciously acknowledged. Once, the display of man's potency was boastfully direct, as in the cod-piece. The upheaval of the French revolution denied men the proud display of their manliness, and transferred sex symbolism to a higher plane. Notwithstanding the fact that male characteristics are now less apparent visually, their symbols are more diffused and, to judge from our undying respect of the clothing ceremonial, more powerful than ever. We are led to ascribe symbolic significance to almost every male article of dress; the magic force that was inherent in the first dress, is still operating today. The masculine tubular style passes in review all the nomenclature of phallicism. Here, dress becomes the key to the subconscious sex life not of the individual but of an entire civilization. From the stiffness of the geometric form as shown in his suit, his trousers and his shoes, the male indulges in his passion for structural solidity until every single attribute of his outfit



represents a piece of armor. The turret of his headgear, his collar that obstructs his respiration, his crackling stiff shirt front for the more important moments of life, the handcuffs of his sleeves—they all contrive to form a sinister picture of the modern savage.

If we believe the anthropologists that man and woman covered their genitals not because of shame, but because of fear of evil spirits, we must concede that nothing much has changed in this respect. Our body shame is fickle and can hardly be made responsible for our fear of exposure; rather do we seem to be haunted by a vestige of apprehension against the evil eye that brings infertility to the exposed reproductive organs. The supposed motives for dress—protection, decoration and modesty—have been identified as transposed uterine, phallic and vaginal symbols.<sup>105</sup> With this explanation modern dress assumes a somewhat disturbing aspect, but the nature of dress loses much of its mystery.

In the light of this evidence, our suffering from clothing apparel takes on added significance. It follows that our compensation for the lack of comfort lies in the incomparable satisfaction derived from the magic force of clothing paraphernalia; under its spell, bodily inconvenience shrinks into nothingness. On the contrary, as Flügel notes, "the full gratification from the phallic significance of clothes can often be obtained when the pressure of clothes is distinctly felt, felt even to the extent of creating some degree of discomfort."<sup>106</sup> Psycho-analytical studies advance knowledge of our reactions under the strain of clothing. Such findings are, however, hardly discussed outside that discipline itself. Hence, specialization fosters multiple morals—the same facts that are expounded with clinical soberness in books on psychology, may enrage the reader if he finds them in a book on clothing.

After all the foregoing it would seem that we are hopelessly trapped by an emotional apparatus. Since we do not know its working well enough, we cannot yet control it. Psychologists, able to discern and disentangle the maze of our instincts, are fatalistic. Their most accurate diagnosis does not necessarily help to expel the evil spirit; the possessed is seldom inclined to rid himself of his fixation. The fetishist—and no man or woman can claim to be free of fetish-worship—is very satisfied with his affliction; so much so, in fact, that he does not think of it as a pathological symptom.<sup>107</sup> The emotional satisfaction which he distills from sartorial trifles in his springboard for more rewarding excursions.

The psychologist Bousfield maintains that "the tendency is more and more to choose a woman as wife not on account of her physical strength or her intelligence *but on account of her artificial sex characteristics*, that is, her so-called artistic manner of dress." He continues: ". . . the less real strength or health or intellectual capacity a woman possesses, as a rule, the more does she spend her energy in becoming adept at attracting by means of *her accessories*, so that there is a steady down-hill tendency in the selective methods of civilized races under present conditions." (Italics by Bousfield.)<sup>108</sup>



## *Dress reform and reform dress*

The last hundred years witnessed a phenomenon that was new in the history of clothing—the organized attempts to change radically the traditional dress of both sexes. Royal and clerical suppressions of dress fashions are nothing new. Sumptuary laws fill many volumes; they date back to biblical or still earlier times. They were mostly of a negative sort, directed against abuse and expensive fads. A provision for improved or more dignified dress was issued only in rare instances. Curiously enough, the northern countries, like Russia and Sweden, were the most active. But the first modern example of a planned dress reform on a nation-wide basis was pondered by Napoleon I.

The clothing style, as we know it today, is largely a by-product of the French revolution. At the time, women's clothes were nearly weightless—a dress was not fashionable if it weighed more than half a pound and could not pass through a finger-ring.<sup>109</sup> Women of that period admired a body relatively uncorrupted by artificial make-belief. Hair was short and free. Personal charms were eagerly displayed; footwear was heelless and graceful. Women's clothes were a success.

We have a minute description of what a well-dressed lady wore in those days. "It happened at a dress performance at the *Grand Opéra* that I had the incomparable pleasure of seeing the divinely beautiful Madame Tallien. The performance was preceded by an official prologue and, according to announcements, was to be honored by the presence of the First Consul; the two others were never mentioned." Madame Tallien wore what our observer calls the austere dress of the Chaste Goddess. "The lustre of her pitch-black hair was heightened by a crowning half-moon of diamonds. A quiver sparkling with precious stones was suspended from her bare shoulders; a tiger-skin was draped around her waist while a short tunic attempted to hide her knees and her alabaster legs. She wore several rings on the toes of her beautiful bare feet which were held to delicate sandals by purple ties. Two nymphs, no less faithful to mythology, were her companions and the effect of the three women detracted indeed the attention from the First Consul."<sup>110</sup> The



writer forgot all about the play, as did everybody else; after the performance, when he tried to get a better view of Madame Tallien and waited to see her getting into her carriage, he was almost choked by the crowd. This, he reflects, was the last triumph of a costume amidst the frenzied applause of the people.

But the First Consul was not willing to share his popularity with a goddess, and the next day he asked Madame Bonaparte to tell her friend "that the mythical times were gone and that the rule of history had arrived."<sup>111</sup> This reveals him as a sober and rather humorless man; how much more must he have suffered, however, from the sight of manhood reeling from one incredible costume to another.

The revolution of man's dress had taken a different course. The classical revival in the arts and architecture that inspired women to disguise themselves as nymphs and graces, did not bestow an equivalent garb upon men. (The few young artists who sported what they held to be Roman togas, remained alone in their initiative.)<sup>112</sup> Male costume was going through a short carnival of which no one ever had seen the like. Repulsed by the new attire, Napoleon took things in his own hands and commissioned the first artist of the country, David, to design the French National Costume.\*

The enterprise was a failure. David's projects did not find Napoleon's approval. As any antique or antiquary design probably was excluded as anachronistic, David, short of any ideas of his own, chose a romantic ideal of the time, and adopted, true fashion-designer fashion, the outfit of a Polish aristocrat for the French citizen. One may speculate what the fate of this clothing venture might have been if Napoleon had chanced upon a more original talent than David. Looking back, it seems that all similar endeavors which were motivated by esthetic impulses only, came inevitably to the same end. So complex a problem cannot be solved without knowledge of anatomy,

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\* *The novel idea of an official reform seemed to have been in the air for quite a while. The following conversation that preceded Napoleon's attempted dress dictatorship, took place, according to the memoirs of the Duchess d'Abrantès, at the salon of Barras, who for a short time was to all intents and purposes the ruler of France.*

*"BARRAS: I am entirely of your opinion—the French costume has neither grace nor dignity; it is uncomfortable without being warm in winter or cool in summer. But how can we induce people to adopt a style? I myself can't . . .*  
*MADAME TALLIEN: Why not? On the contrary, aren't you the head of the government? Who else than you could give a better example and ask imperatively that it should be followed?*

*BARRAS (kissing her hand): My beautiful Athenian, only you could command such a thing. One doesn't dress people with the help of police; for such an undertaking I would need a minister like you . . ."*<sup>113</sup>

*Is it too far-fetched to assume that it was Madame Tallien herself who put the idea of dress reform into Napoleon's mind?*





*A design for the reform of French civilian clothing  
made by David at the request of Napoleon Bonaparte.  
Museum of Versailles.*



psychology, economics, and technology; the contributions of all these and several other disciplines have to be integrated and combined with the laws of esthetics. It is not enough to follow a nostalgic vision of historic precedent or the costumes of far-away lands. Because the factors that determine historic and folk dress are foreign to our civilization and our time, any arbitrary adoption cannot amount to more than a masquerade.

Efforts to improve the sanitary quality of clothing go back to the end of the eighteenth century. Dress reform, particularly the American movement which extends over the second half of the nineteenth century, has become regarded as a comic incident or, at best, as a concomitant phenomenon of the temperance movement. Of course, the gruesome clothes that were assaulted by the reformers, have since become historic costumes; according to Laver's scale of taste, the costume going out of fashion is hideous and ridiculous; but it becomes quaint, charming, and romantic to the second and third generation.<sup>114</sup> Whereas the European avant-garde of reformers was composed of physiologists and artists, the initiative in America rested almost exclusively with women. The male, dull and bigoted, turned out to be a stern objector to the intelligent views of a few women.

Most people allow themselves to see the past only in the current romantic-patriotic de luxe edition of moving pictures and best-sellers. A more realistic approach is needed for a true comprehension of the dress characteristics of past periods. For instance, the clothing-minded should have a more critical view of that period which loving nostalgia named the Gay Nineties. It was a climax of elegance and *savoir vivre*, a time of prosperity and majestically sweeping female dresses. The following snapshot is handed down to us by the observer of a trifling incident: A lady, attired in a dress with a train that answered the dictum of the fashion, boarded a cab after a short walk and left on the curbstone the rubbish she had collected while sweeping the street. The onlooker, without doubt an analytical-minded person, made this inventory of the refuse:

- 2 cigar ends.
- 9 cigarette do.
- A portion of pork pie.
- 4 toothpicks.
- 2 hairpins.
- 1 stem of a clay pipe.
- 3 fragments of orange peel.
- 1 slice of cat's meat.
- Half a sole of a boot.
- 1 plug of tobacco (chewed).

Straw, mud, scraps of paper, and miscellaneous street refuse, ad.lib.<sup>115</sup>

A still-life of less prosaic nature was painted by one Dr. Casagrandi in 1900. Reading a paper before the medical association in Rome, he reported on his bacteriological examinations of trailing skirts, for which experiments he had





DRESS FOR THE COUNTRY OR WATERING-PLACES.

*A lady reformer wrote: "... men should wear women's clothes for a day, and women should wear those of men—for only one day. It would not be long before something would be done . . ."*<sup>116</sup>

*From the Picture Collection of the New York Public Library.*

employed a number of women to walk for one hour through the city streets. To his satisfaction he found large colonies of germs including those of tuberculosis, typhoid fever, tetanus and influenza, not to mention lesser bacilli, all of which were represented on each skirt.<sup>117</sup>

In the New World, unhygienic conditions were magnified by rapidly growing and inadequately planned cities. The habit of bathing had disappeared with the invasion of the white man. The bath, considered a hedonistic pastime, was outlawed. Such heritage could not have failed to cause an inferiority



complex, the compensation of which is shown in our present attitude. Having overcome the moral fear of water, we now judge every national culture, old and new, by its plumbing. Only against the historic background of squalor and piggishness do the activities of American lady reformers seem understandable and respectable.

From the beginning, the pioneers of modern dress went different ways in Europe and America. Germany, where hygiene had become a fad, like the eating of vitamin pills in present-day America, was the leader of dress reform on the continent. Jäger, Lahmann, Kneipp, attracted attention throughout the world. Each advocated what *he* believed to be the most hygienic material for clothing and condemned the view of his fellow reformer. Jäger recommended wool only; the two other, cotton and linen respectively. Their industry was prodigious.



*Dr. Gustav Jäger, wearing the reform dress he designed in 1880.*

Jäger discovered that the physical source of our emotions could be found in some subtle essences contained by and emanating from our bodies. These essences were exhaled not only by mouth and nose and skin, but from our brain as well, "as I have proved by experiment."<sup>118</sup> He divided the body exhalations according to their nature in salutary fragrant and noxious malodorous ones. To balance odors and emotions he designed his woolen system of dress. Woolen clothing, he taught, retains the pleasant emanations of the body which "induce a sense of vigour and sound health" and, simultaneously, renders possible the complete evaporation of the "noxious" essences.<sup>119</sup>

His view on corsets was no less original. Though admitting that there was nothing more prejudicial to health than the corset, he assured women that their fault did not consist in wearing a corset, but in choosing the wrong kind of material for their corsets. Woolen corsets were, of course, the answer to their problems.<sup>120</sup>

Jäger's wearing apparel—it included even woolen boots, hats, handkerchiefs and bed-clothes—was sold everywhere, and his American catalog, *Dr. Gustav Jäger's Sanitary Woolen System of Dress*, ought to command the respect of every good businessman.<sup>121</sup> The gospels of these men do not appeal to us any more. Jäger's advice to wear a shirt for six or eight weeks before laundering, has lost its power of conviction even to the thrifty.<sup>122</sup>

Still less happy was the esthetic effluence of the German reformers. Jäger's male costume—he might have flattered himself that in time it would become the German National Costume—was the adaptation of a soldier's uniform and represented an extreme case of the tubular style.<sup>123</sup>

The beautification of woman's dress was undertaken with much strain by a group of artists who simply sought to incorporate dress into their world of ornament. The women reformers of America and England were unconcerned with pseudo-scientific and pseudo-artistic arguments; they asked nothing less but universal introduction of short skirts or female trousers. Their symposia, published in progressive magazines, and the papers prepared for their



assemblies make still good reading today; they are a far cry from the commercial trash of modern fashion editors. It is also a pleasant surprise to discover that the militant ladies were graced with elegance and humor.

"Nature never intended that the sexes should be distinguished by apparel. The beard, which was assigned solely to man, is the natural token of sex. But man effeminates himself, contrary to the purpose of nature, by shaving off his beard; and, then, lest his sex should be mistaken, he arrogates to himself a particular form of dress, the wearing of which by the female sex he declares to be grave misdemeanor."<sup>124</sup>

"Dress is the most complex and difficult of all arts; for resting on the framework of the human body, an adjunct and accomplice in all man's expression, it requires the broadest knowledge of humanity and of individuality to understand its mysteries."<sup>125</sup>

The pathetic inadequacy of contemporary dress was pilloried by the contributor to a symposium: "When I see a woman climbing upstairs with her baby in one arm, and its bowl of bread and milk in the other, and see her tripping on her dress at every stair (if, indeed, baby, bowl, bread, milk, and mother do not go down in universal chaos), it is only from the efforts of long skill and experience on the part of the mother in performing that acrobatic feat."<sup>126</sup>

The historic event of the introduction of bifurcated garments for women, was authenticated by Mrs. Bloomer herself. Her statement is given here to dispel the belief that she was the inventor of the costume that from then on was to bear her name. "In March, 1851, Elizabeth Smith Miller, daughter of Hon. Gerrit Smith of Peterboro, N. Y., visited her cousin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, at Seneca Falls, N. Y., which was then my home, and where I was publishing the *Lily*, and where Mrs. Stanton also resided. Mrs. Miller came to us in a short skirt and full Turkish trousers, a style of dress she had been wearing some two months. The matter of woman's dress having been just previously discussed in the *Lily*, Mrs. Miller's appearance led Mrs. Stanton to at once adopt a style, and I very soon followed, Mrs. Stanton introducing it to Seneca Falls public two or three days in advance of me."<sup>127</sup>

In spite of incomplete and contradictory accounts in the papers of the time, we can form a fairly faithful picture of the garment itself and of the public's reaction on two continents. Mrs. Bloomer wore her bloomers for seven consecutive years.<sup>128</sup> The first dress reached a few inches below the knees and was of red and black silk. Her legs were covered with a pair of wide trousers, made from the same material. She omitted altogether the then obligatory five to ten petticoats.

The "Turkish" trousers were followed by "Syrian" dresses, and the costumes spread to England. Ladies attired in bloomers, or, as they were called at that time, the "Camilla Costume", were seen in London, but also made their appearance in Scotland and Ireland. However "the wearers were not suffi-



*Bloomers.*

*From the Family Herald, 1851.*







*At right, a contemporary lithograph of Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, wearing her adopted costume. Her intelligent criticism was not matched by equally intelligent designs for clothes. Her vague esthetic ideal was influenced by a renewed interest in the near Orient and liberated Greece. The literature of her days produced many diaries of traveling ladies that gave minute and awesome descriptions of the pleasures and burdens of Oriental women.*

*At left, the engraving of a Turkish woman, printed 240 years before the trend of wearing Turkish trousers started in the northern part of the state of New York. The two costumes are quite similar: The barrel-like abdomen, skirt, jacket, sleeves and trousers differ only in proportion. Of course, Mrs. Bloomer's trousers and skirt were not transparent, and her shoes were cut for the accommodation of one toe only.*

*From Sandys, A Relation of a Journey etc., 1615.*



ciently nerved to withstand for any length of time the persecuting curiosity excited by the transatlantic garb." A reader of the London Daily News wrote appropriately: "May I be allowed in your column to ask why the British public is so horrified at the idea of women in trousers, seeing that they have for many years tolerated a number of men (from the north of the Tweed) in wearing petticoats—and shockingly short petticoats too?"<sup>129</sup>

In England, as well as in America, it was the almighty public opinion that decided the issue. "I never believed in total depravity until I wore the reform dress in New York," said Maria M. Jones, a pioneering woman.<sup>130</sup> In the eighteen-sixties, New York was a most unsophisticated city, and we are not surprised to hear that Mrs. Jones and her friends had to suffer the intolerance of her people. When the ladies in their new dresses appeared on the streets, they had to face moral and physical assault. Youngsters found in them an ideal target for snowballs and, in the warm season, for apple-cores. Adults voiced their indignation loudly in public. In print and speech the young women were accused of immodesty.

Ironically, one pertinent reason for the introduction of reform dress was its being considered highly virtuous by its adepts. It concealed the legs to perfection, which was not the case with the hoopskirts of the time. Mrs. Jones pitied the fashionable female who "frantically grasping her skirts in front with one hand, with the other lifts hoops and all behind her, and tiptoes across the street, with her clothing in the rear at an altitude of which she has no conception, and revealing, not only feet and ankles, but even limbs, to an extent which a neatly-clad Bloomer would blush to think of."<sup>131</sup> Clergymen, with their monopoly on ethics, joined in the chorus of insulting voices. Ladies, wearing the new dress, were unceremoniously thrown out of churches and told that their attire would not be tolerated in places of worship or lecture halls.<sup>132</sup>

Since physicians could not produce any sound argument against bifurcated skirts, they contented themselves to fall in with the mob's laughter. "The idea of females wearing trousers may be scouted as ridiculous" wrote *The Medical Times*. Obviously, doctors preferred long skirts. When waitresses and vaudeville performers adopted the new dress, its end had come irrevocably. Mary E. Tillotson who published—in improved spelling—a history of the first thirty-five years of the reform movement in the United States, gives us some reasons for its decline. "Among staid matrons hailing this reform as a saviour from dizeaz caused by labor under unnatural bodily burdens, many assumed the costume from love ov novelty and in the hope that fashion would concur; ov cours a little ridicule redily restored the perilous petticoats ov such as these. Feeble ones goeing strong in its use, and having minds to perceeve the revival ov all faculties, valued it highly; yet frends and pozishon tempted many ov the thautful to return, tho reluctantly. One whom I knu had her old shackles repaired for another slavery, a full yeer before she could bring her consence to the test ov violating all the best convictshons ov her being. Thus did thousands—thus do tha now—warp soul and body into the noose tha kno is



*Mrs. Maria M. Jones, an American dress reformer of the eighteen-sixties, stoically endured the insolence of her compatriots. She is the author of a book on clothing, which was much read abroad.*



*On facing page: Ladies' dress reform meeting at Freeman Place Chapel, Boston, 1874.*

*From the picture collection of the New York Public Library.*



*These supposedly hygienic garments, designed by a physician who took an active part in the reform movement of the nineties, do not cast a favorable light upon the medical profession. But, considering the moral concepts of that time, an uncorseted woman was a bawdy woman even to a doctor.*

*From Dr. Spener, Die jetzige Frauenkleidung, 1897.*

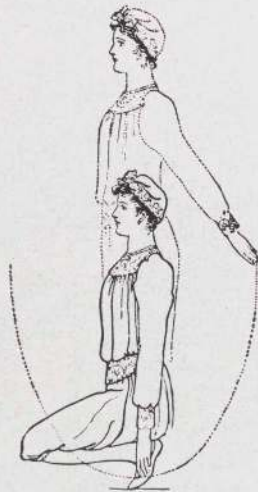
deigned to consume the effishency that would cultivate and manifest individual power and choice. Appaling times loom over humanity when so nearly all dare not enact known rite."<sup>133</sup>

"Physical health thru dress" should not come to women for another two generations. The fainting female was the order of the day and tubercular heroines ruled the literary stage. "No girl in the physiology class had so small a waist," confessed one Miss Grace Greenwood, "I had occasional fainting fits, which rendered me interesting. For these and that ugly pain in the side, the cough and palpitations, physicians were called in. If they *thought* corsets, they did not mention them. Doctors were delicate in those days. Not knowing what to do, they bled me."<sup>139</sup>









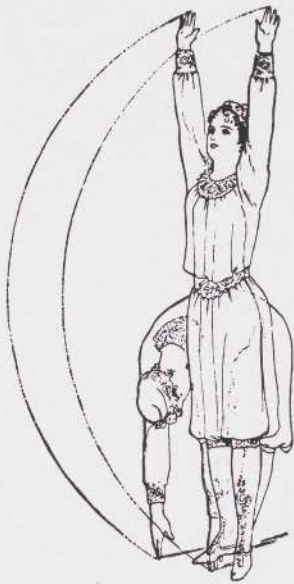
The adulation of the physically handicapped girl was general, and inspired poets and painters. If women refused to conform to the fashionable morbid type, they were severely censured. "*What has the average girl to do with a gymnasium?*" italicizes the author of a book against rational clothes. "Sweeping and scrubbing a floor and dusting out a room, is infinitely more beneficial and useful than going to a sanctified room to turn somersaults."<sup>135</sup> The sanctified room was indispensable for gymnastics, because female exercises had to be guarded from the evil eye of man as a most intimate body performance.

The great variety of knickers, "rationals" and "trowsers," led however to a better recognition of the complicated mechanics of dress. When the corset, which had served seven generations, was discarded by a few women, they realized with dismay that, when it came to the new problem of attaching their improved dress, the female torso was a poor substitute for the corset. Speculations and experiments ensued, and schools of thought were founded on every new device for hanging dresses on that peg which was the recently discovered body. Before long, those who fastened their skirts around the hips came to know the disadvantages of this system. Skirts and petticoats were still of unimaginable heaviness, and the pressure of the waistband was an evil only slightly smaller than the tyranny of the corset. Equally unfeasible, because of excessive weight, proved to be the idea of suspending all clothing from the shoulders. Besides, the people who for centuries had not known anything but the bodice with its rigorous and artificial division between upper and lower body, regarded the garment that restored the anatomical unity as unspeakably funny. When all was said, and all tentative solutions had ended in disappointment, the bare fact was disclosed that, in 1900 A.D., despite the examples of history, Western civilization was ignorant of the principles of clothing.

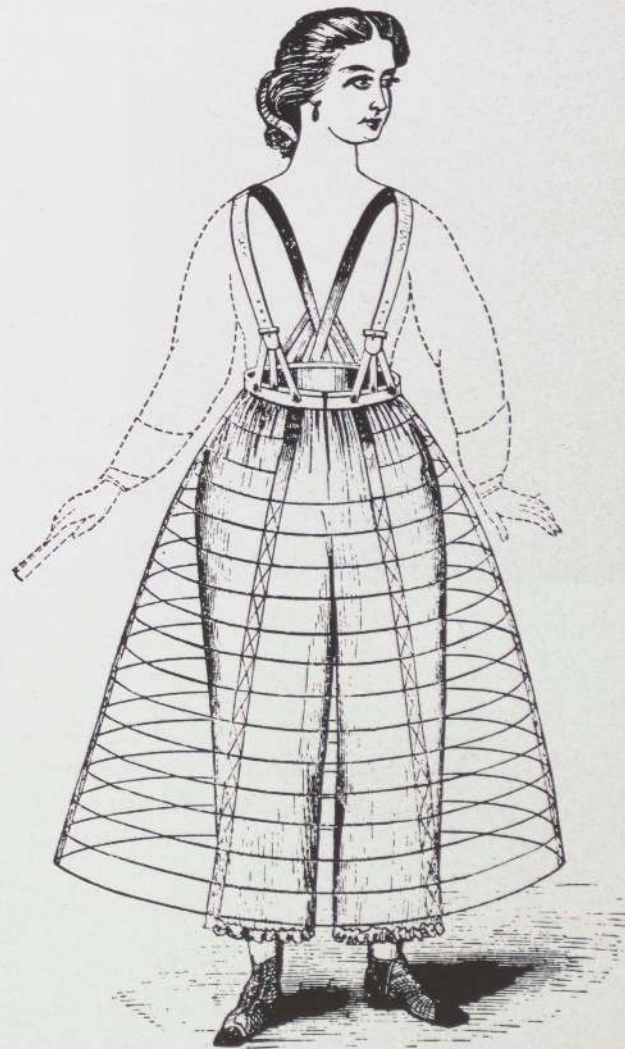
Flying, the phantastic dream, had come true, but men and women and children limped along, enveloped in elaborate trappings devised by perverted minds; females, wobbly and liquid under their whale-bone harness; males, proud and pitiless in their phallic uniform. Only their incorruptibility guarded them from the temptation of relaxing. The spine-less deserters who succumbed to the lure of rational dress were castigated as abnormal and anti-social. "The number of invalids, degenerates, and people below par generally," snorts a writer, "is so great nowadays that anything in the shape of creature comfort will sell like hot-cakes."<sup>136</sup> Comfort was thought fit for degenerates—we have to bear such opinion in mind in order to understand the fear of comfort in our own time. Comfort, then, was for invalides; the asses who preached and conformed to this moral, were the same who made the laws, who built the houses that have become our architectural straight-jackets, who laid out the cities that today stand accusingly against them.

The twentieth century saw the end of the reform movement. What survived, in Germany and other European countries, were belated artistic demonstrations; the last reform clothes were little more than timid adaptations from the *haute*





Five illustrations from an advertisement of physical culture in  
The Jenness Miller Illustrated Monthly. 1891.



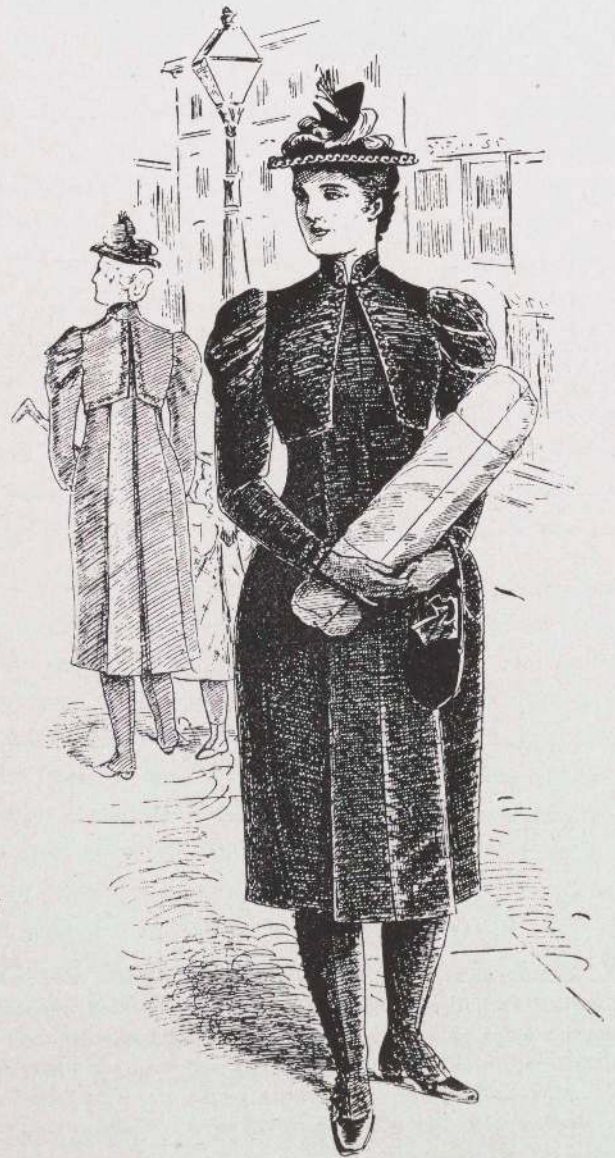
Mrs. Jones, dress reformer, firmly believed that she had, once and for all, solved the clothing problem. This is her own joyous comment on the construction shown at right: "I had overcome every obstacle but that (the support of the skirt); that, I was convinced, was insurmountable, when suddenly, by the inventive genius of a dear friend . . . the vexed problem was triumphantly solved, practically demonstrated beyond the possibility of a doubt."

Quotation and illustration from Jones, *Woman's Dress; its Moral and Physical Relations*. 1865.





*Reform dresses were often as hideous as fashionable attire. This German creation was shown in Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration, 1904.*



*Mrs. Miller's "American Costume" was recommended by the National Committee for Dress Reform.*

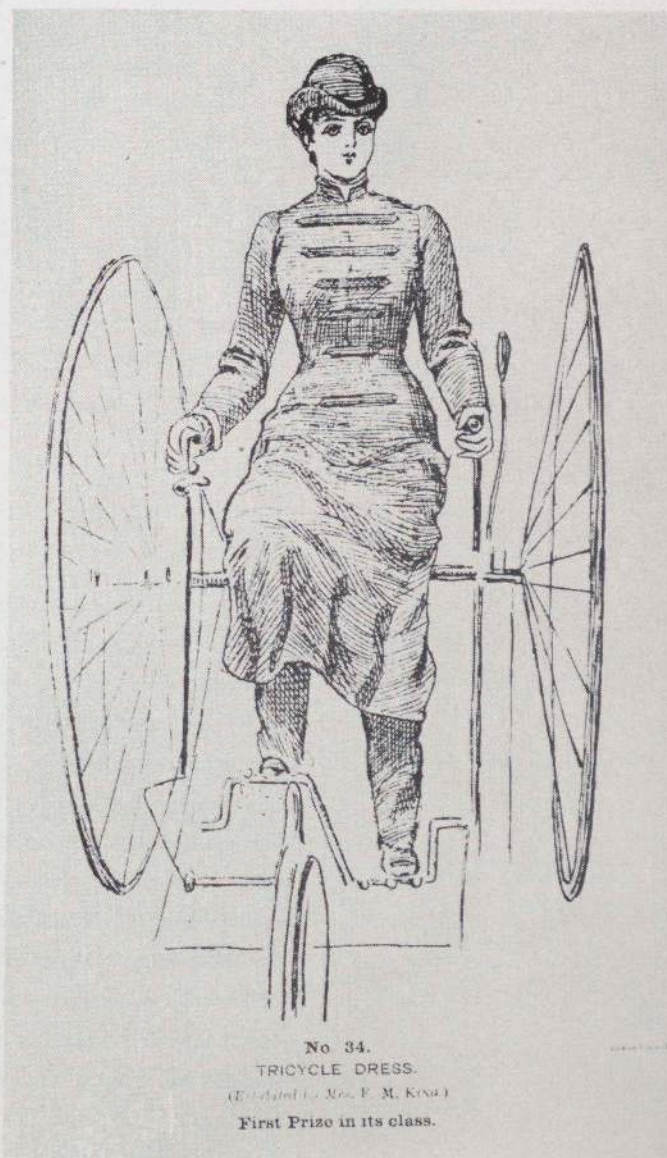
*From American Monthly Review of Reviews, 1893.*



*Below: The notion that every physical activity demands a special outfit has been successfully spread by the advertising man and has become anchored in the public's mind. This sporting-dress, apparently inspired by the attire of a hack driver, seems nonetheless singularly appropriate for riding a tricycle.*

*At left: Taking one thing with another, this was a rather good prophecy. However, at that time, this dress of the future must have looked like an unadulterated stage costume.*

*Both illustrations are from the exhibition catalog of the Rational Dress Association, London, 1883.*





*couture*. Mrs. Bloomer had long ago joined the lovely but unearthly company of the Mmes. Récamier and Tallien; even women addicted to mild sports again wore trailing skirts. A lonely but eloquent testimonial to this epoch comes from an architect, Schulze-Naumburg. His small book on woman's dress has been called a fundamental work, even in this country.<sup>137</sup> In Europe, it has been a textbook for forty years; American libraries keep it under lock and key as a "forbidden book."



*Caricatures of rational dress in the Building News, 1883.*

The woman who came closest to Schulze-Naumburg's ideal was born at this side of the globe. Isadora Duncan, a shrewdly naive provincial genius, captured the world and its great men not so much by her dancing and preaching as by her courage to abjure the sartorial fashions of her days. Though she has been dead for less than twenty years, her memory is befogged by her saccherine followers. The uniqueness of her apparition, her Messiah-like fervor that gained her among the impressionable German public the name of the Holy Isadora, her boldness that often was sheer exhibitionism, were of the sort reformers are made of. But, besides giving the example of her own person, she actually never advocated specific clothing. Once she urged the mayor of New York to have school-children dressed uniformly, but she might have only suggested a custom that was familiar to her from foreign countries. And her stripping the daughters of the Rhine of their flesh-colored tights at the sanctum of Bayreuth is more of a theatrical-historical incident than a milestone in dress reform.



While she was too much of a curious female not to enjoy occasionally smart creations by Paris dress-makers, which were strange and awful compromises with her esthetic philosophy, she was also by far too conscious and proud of her idolized gait to put heels under her feet. Once, when she surveyed her turbulent life in a melancholic mood, she said that her real contribution was to have freed women from the corset. But this was a beautiful illusion. What brought about the disappearance of corsets during the first world war was the prosaic necessity of conserving all steel for armaments. One Mrs. Nicholas Longworth has been credited with unofficially deciding for her countrywomen that corsets were non-essentials. And a member of the War Industries Board testified that American women's sacrifice of their stays during the first world war released 28,000 tons of steel—enough to build two battleships.<sup>138</sup>

Coercive dress reform on a national basis, which had failed under Napoleon, succeeded in our time. The case of modern Turkey is worth of a critical glimpse, because it exemplifies how far the life of a nation can be affected by arbitrary laws on dress. In 1925 Kamâl Pasha, later called Atatürk, issued dress laws which were part of his revolutionary changes in Turkish life. To be accurate, it was dress reform in reverse; he banished the old oriental costumes in favor of European dress, which meant that costumes that were in many ways superior to the Western type had to yield to the ordinary and colorless industrial dress. But it was exactly the trite and commonplace that suited the intention of the dictator. He was convinced that in order to bring his country into the family of modern nations, he first had to stamp out all religious and profane customs and costumes that hitherto had represented Turkey.<sup>139</sup>

The turban—a piece of cloth wound around the head—was to give way to the hideous felt hat, the wide and comfortable coat to the tight-buttoned suit. "We shall wear shoes and boots," cried the dictator in rapture to the assembly, "we shall wear trousers, shirts, waist-coats, collars, neckties; we'll have a headcovering with a brim, or to say it more clearly, we'll have a hat. We shall wear redingotes, jackets, dinner-jackets and tail-coats," and, he added angrily, only idiots would hesitate to do so.<sup>140</sup> Sure enough, there were some who would rather die than submit to what they regarded as an infamy; and die they did. After a few dozen dissenters had been hanged, the dress reform went under way as smoothly as could be expected with the worst hat shortage in history.<sup>141</sup>

The Turkish change of dress and especially the famous hat law has to be understood as a tremendous effort to abolish racial and social discrimination. From his headcovering one had gathered the Turkish man's faith, his standing, his profession, even his political creed; Turkish tombstones are crowned with the dead's headgear carved in stone. The fez, worn throughout the Mohammedan world, had been forced on the turban-wearing Turks by a former ruler. Now Kamâl Pasha denounced it as "a sign of ignorance, of



*Isadora Duncan abroad.*  
*From Duncan, Memoiren.*



fanaticism, of hatred of progress and civilization."<sup>142</sup> He was the first to appear in full-dress before an assembly, and he prescribed tail-coats and top-hats for his functionaries at official ceremonies.

The new dress interfered with numerous national and religious habits. Traditional headgear had been brimless—shielding his eyes against the sun, even with his hand only, was improper for a Moslem. Having to keep on his new brimmed hat during prayer, a conflict arose every time the kneeling man tried to touch the ground with his forehead. No wonder that the Turkish gentleman, unprejudiced as to the European hat styles, picked what seemed least obstructive to his religious exercises. In the fall days of 1925, the streets of Istanbul were gay with surprising hats. Jockey and student caps, baby bonnets and tea cosies adorned sad and beautiful faces with bushy brows and patriarchal beards.\* This vaudeville, still remembered as "*la crise des chapeaux*" marked the triumphant arrival of Western culture.

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\* *The author, visiting Turkey during the summer and fall of 1925, had ample opportunity to get first-hand impressions of the sudden change in the Turkish way of life.*



## *The poor man's esthetics*

People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get.

(A. L. Huxley, *Brave New World*)

"We must honestly face the conclusion that our principle points ultimately not to clothing, but to nakedness."<sup>143</sup> With these words, Flügel, author of the most extensive psychology of clothes, outlines the future of dress. It is quite probable that humanity should in the course of history retrace its steps to an earlier state of society, though the primitive conditions of an archaic age will necessarily have been surpassed by accumulated knowledge and a different kind of conscience. At the end of its evolution, dress, cleansed of its dregs, will stand as a sublimation of its first motive: decoration. Greatly relieved of its task of physical protection by a perfected control of our environment—which should be performed by the builders of shelter and transportation rather than by the maker of clothes,—and no longer disconcerted by the kaleidoscopic fashions of modesty and immodesty, clothing will ultimately become as non-essential as art; in fact, only then shall we find justification for calling it an art.

Nobody is able to predict when such change will come about. At the present we are repressed by thousand-year old superstitions of guilt and fear, the heritage of our cultural hotchpotch. Besides, these problems concern only a minority of humanity. Many colored races have never heeded our supplications and threats; where the climate was favorable to tradition, their belief in the innocence of the naked body remained intact. Among the enormous populations of the Far East we find conditions which, transplanted to our own environments, would seem sheer utopia. We are in the habit of overestimating



the white civilization because we were able to dominate the rest of the world by physical force. Our racial superiority complex does not allow us to share the benefits of other cultures and, therefore, we'll have to go a long way, should we insist in being guided by our instincts only.

Viewed from a practical standpoint, the future course of the development towards nakedness is barred by present civic and religious laws. One rather comical incident illustrates the scruples to which public servants are exposed today. A clergyman, uncertain whether it was lawful for him to marry an unclothed couple on a secluded mountain top, asked the attorney general of the state for advice on this delicate question. It is reported that the attorney, after consulting the Bible and the laws of the state, concluded that there was no legal objection to a couple being married in the "same natural uniform they were born in."<sup>144</sup>

The laws which deal with modesty have been loosely interpreted. Even in Puritan countries where the body taboo "became transformed from a mere social convention into a moral principle,"<sup>145</sup> this principle is anything but firm. The gigantic industrial apparatus which produces our articles of clothing—a novelty in the history of humanity—obliges us through its own laws of mechanics and economics to a constant process of amending our views on body exposure. Mass production, being based on mass sales, has given rise to the creation of consumer's demands by engineering artificial obsolescence. Swift changes in dress fashions are caused mainly by the manufacturer's dread of economic catastrophe, and by his exploitation of the need for erotic satisfaction on the part of men and women. Recognition of the erotic character of clothes led fashion promoters to a rapid circulation of anatomical fashions and to the overthrow of seemingly well-established ideas of corporeal modesty.

It is evident that, should we aspire to the level of other races where fashion in our sense is absent, the loss of the fashion stimulant must be compensated by other and, eventually, more desirable benefits. Whether we shall be able to surmount deep-rooted prejudice and social snobbery, or whether we can find our way back to genuine simplicity, remains conjecture.

The average individual, short-sighted and frankly selfish, is seldom concerned with issues of future importance. The far-reaching mechanization of daily performances has dulled his senses, and only in time of emergency are his instincts on the alert. Apathetic also to the esthetic aspects of clothing, his interest can be enlisted only by presenting him with money- and labor-saving innovations.

Regardless of the future adventures in body exposure, the alleys that are open to experimentation and improvement in clothing can be envisaged within limits. Few contributions may be expected from the developments during the last war. The specialized fighting dresses will not have much influence on every-day clothing; and the footwear of the foot soldier remained essentially the same that it was in the Civil War. Again, it is not to be expected that



new and synthetic materials will have much bearing on the construction of clothes; the constant flow of new materials into the building field did not contribute to a better understanding of the principles of architecture.

In the purely technical field of dress improvement, energetic changes will probably come about only if they can be reconciled with the interests of manufacturers and dealers. Disgraceful as this complete dependence on the regimented product is, we are left without any choice in an industrial country that has exterminated or degraded the original makers of clothing, the tailors and shoemakers. (It is to be hoped that the countries which kept alive the ancient professions of clothing makers will also be the first ones to present a humanitarian solution of the clothing problem, much in the same way as they pioneered in architecture and in the arts.)

It is much easier to say what dress should not be than to tell what it should be. But then, this does not apply to clothing alone, it is the case in all creative manifestations. At the present, clothing is not more than manufacturer's goods, and a prying glimpse into the art of dress of a hundred generations hence, would not make us any wiser. We are more concerned with the intermediary steps toward the final achievement. By limiting our speculation to the immediate future, we shall enumerate only changes which might be reasonably expected and which would be desirable for very pertinent reasons.

The progressive equalization of male and female dress should not cause alarm; costumes which are least subject to tradition, such as the varieties of sports dress, show this tendency quite clearly. Tennis dress consists, for the male and female player alike, of a shirt, the shortest of trousers, and heelless shoes for the protection of the court rather than the feet. The similarity of this dress for both sexes is all the more remarkable because play, today as ever, provides an opportunity singularly favorable for courtship and display of a fine physique.

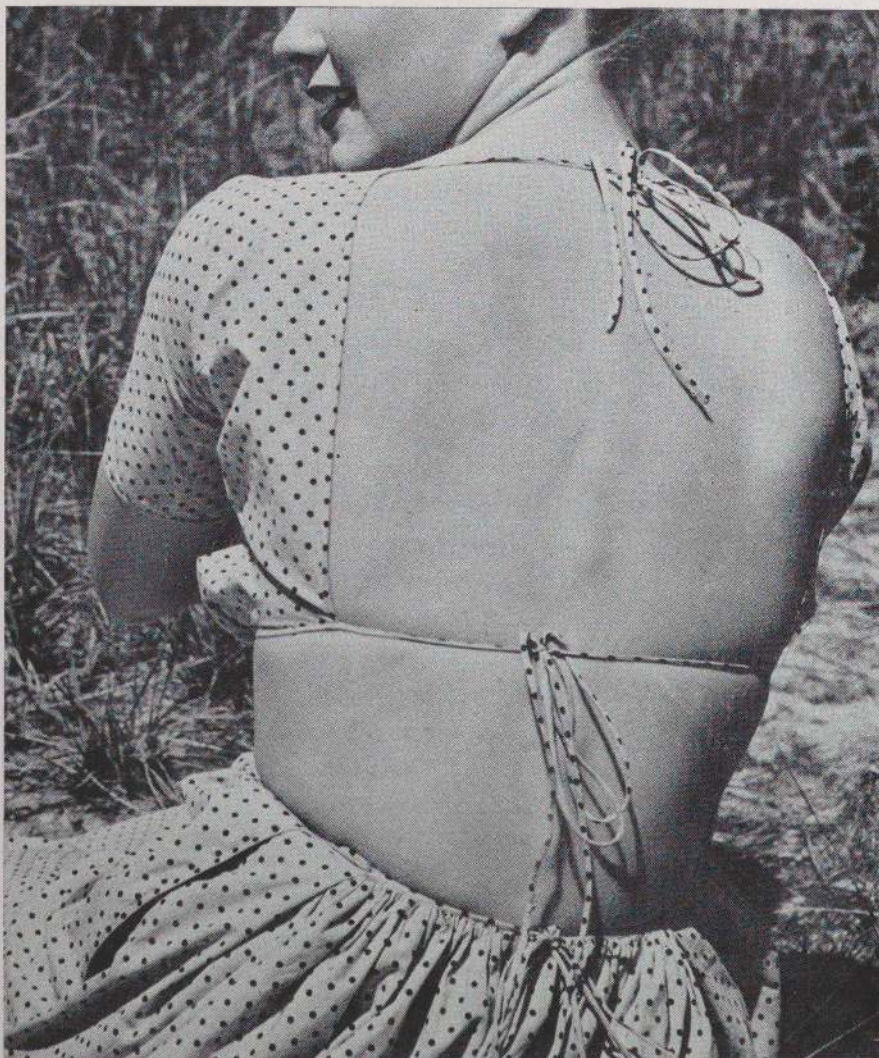
Modern sports dress, whether for ball playing or skying, proves convincingly that when climatic conditions are extreme and good physical performance is paramount, distinct sexual outfits are ignored or believed undesirable. It is, therefore, not clear why these sensible norms should not be the rule on other occasions. Convention still prescribes male garments which are from three to five times as heavy as female dresses. That the Wall Street businessman in long trousers has a more pleasing appearance than the British officer in shorts, is wishful thinking on the part of the former. The visibility of his legs might at first detract from his impressiveness, but it is a fair guess that the legs of his wife are even less an object of interest, and we have learned to resign ourselves to the sight of hers.

The advantages of lighter and less cumbersome wear could be brought about almost without attacking the problem of designing new clothes. The anatomical type of knitted and crotched articles calls only for minor corrections—sweaters need a more intelligent application of the principles of construction; the anatomical sleeve must not be inserted, tailor-wise, but be one with the



rest. It is quite evident that anatomical fitting can only be achieved by the use of homogenous and stretchable materials. How then, shall textiles be put to intelligent use?

It would be a good thing to forget for a moment about scissors and knives. A few years ago, the idea of un-cut modern clothes would have seemed preposterous. But meanwhile, a handful of genuine talents among American designers began to investigate the feasibility of garments modeled from the simplest of geometric patterns, like rectangles or triangles. Already, these few experiments brought forward more basic designs than were produced by all the clothes makers of the last hundred years put together. However, a radical departure from the humdrum of the tailor's pattern is for the present only conceivable in the new field of so-called play-clothes.



*True inventiveness in design is practically restricted to play-clothes, a category of dress which, in time, may become the starting-point for the creation of a genuine contemporary apparel.*

*Designer: Claire McCardell. Courtesy Life magazine.*

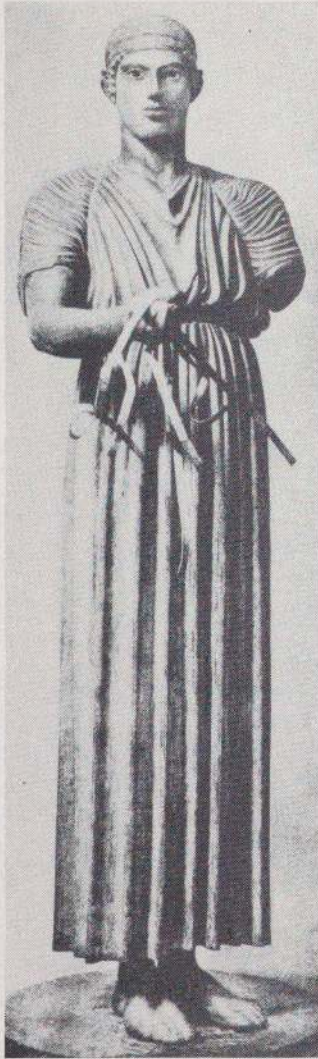


*American play clothes, 1892.*  
*From the Picture Collection of*  
*the New York Public Library.*



A tentative definition of this category of dress may be welcome at this point. The popularization of sports—swimming, mountain climbing, fencing—was not accompanied by the introduction of adequate sports dress. The need for an appropriate sartorial equipment was not felt immediately, and the first outfits of sporting men and women were, generally, slight modifications of the dominant day dress of the time. Crinolines for the sea-shore, tail-coats for hunting, trousers and skirts for gymnastics (the term gymnastics means unclothed exercising), the outfits were all beautifully unfunctional. The timid fashions that were displayed at bicycling or tennis playing strike us today as being even more grotesque. The use of less ceremonious outdoor clothes came only with the lifting of several body taboos after the first world war. A new nudity that sponsored bare arms and shoulders, legs and thighs, made—for the first time since antiquity—unrestricted movement feasible. The sports that soon lost much or all of their original character, degenerated into spectator sports on the one hand, and purely social gatherings, as sea-bathing, on the other. In the case of the latter, the human body was the prize exhibit, and its display overshadowed all aquatic interest. “Do women of today show their legs because they have risen superior to the prudery of their grandmothers, or is it because, in a world in which two women out of every ten cannot possibly find husbands, and polygamy is taboo, a display of their limbs gives them an advantage?” asked a diffident artist.<sup>146</sup> The costume for play grounds shrunk rapidly to a mere *cache-sex*, though fashion editors expostulated on the correct differentiations of sports dress.





*Charioteer. Greek sculpture, 5th century B.C. Cloth was clothing itself; the best dressed man was the one who knew how to wear his dress best.*

Here then, were the play-clothes of the century—play-clothes in the truest sense of the word, instrumental in the all-important game, flirtation. Quite logically, denudation stopped short of nudity itself. The unclothed body has never been as much of a lure as the scantily clothed one. Hence its sacred position in the arts. Psychologists affirm that this viewpoint has remained unchanged.

Thanks to the sociological atavism which play-clothes represent, they are by far the most interesting type of clothing. As play-dress proper, they might become obsolete with the acceptance of nudity for playing, but they will have served a better purpose as a transitional step towards a more intelligent future costume.

The good designer, bored with the limited task of merely hiding or setting off sexual characteristics, nowadays has recourse to the wealth of freely draped forms. The duality of jacket and trousers, the only type evolved by anatomical dress, can be confronted with an endless procession of historic and folk costumes of the gravitational sort, i.e., dresses which fall to the ground. It augurs well for the future and it is complementary to the pioneering designers, that many of their play-clothes are not borrowed from the past, but are genuine inventions and represent true contemporary designs.

What are the eminent advantages of clothes made from primary geometric shapes?

They avoid complicated cutting and piecing; they need almost no sewing. By eliminating most of the machine-work, they reduce the cost.

Their adjustability and flexibility do away with our expensive and wasteful system of sizes.

Since they are perfectly flat, they can be easily folded or rolled without losing shape. They need, therefore, only a fraction of the storage space of conventional dress.

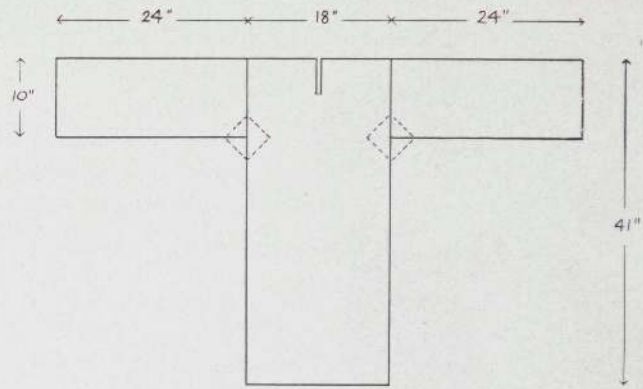
Being inexpensive and needing a minimum of space, our wardrobe can be several times larger than now and of ample variety.

Since they can fulfill any number of functions, they abolish our artificial categories of informal, and more or less formal dress.

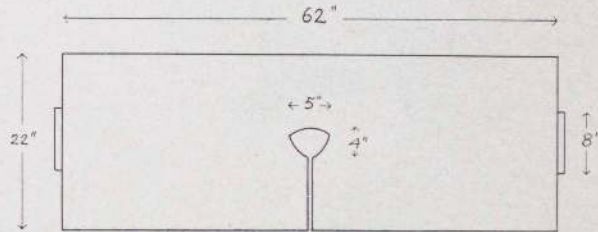
They can be machine-launched easier and oftener, while our odd-shaped, bulky, button- and pocket-studded garments take a severe mauling every time they are washed or cleaned.

Last, not least, we shall again become aware of the inherent beauty of uncut materials. This will help us to acquire basic esthetic principles and enable us to have a more articulate judgment in matters of taste.





*Dress and jacket, made from rectangular pieces of material. Diagrams indicate dimensions. Designer: Claire McCardell. Courtesy Harper's Bazaar and Mademoiselle.*







The adoption of non-anatomical clothes will have repercussions beyond the purely technical and economic results. Among the gravest disadvantages of present-day dress is its unmanageableness. Unlike the costumes of India, Japan, the near East—and the garments of the Greco-Roman civilization—our clothes cannot be folded and put on top of each other when they are not in use. The need of keeping them constantly in shape causes a grotesque situation. The hanger, that abstraction of the human frame, whose task is badly limited by its being a two-dimensional affair, ruins the best-fitting suit. But then, to be accurate, modern clothes should only be worn by tailor's dummies and show-window manikins and not by human beings at all. Said Bernard Shaw: "The great tragedy of the average man's life is that Nature refuses to conform to the cylindrical ideal, and when the marks of his knees and elbows begin to appear in his cylinders he is filled with shame."<sup>147</sup>

When we travel, we have to take along our own supply of clothes. This cumbersome procedure is necessary because we depend entirely on our personal clothes which are supposedly molded, "fitted" to our physique. We thus carry trunks which are veritable closets, with rods for hanging our outfits, with shoe-trees and hat compartments, an idea which would strike us as most





*At the exhibition Are clothes modern?, the author made a point of the advantages of clothes made without recourse to pattern cutting. This idea was derided by fashion writers as absurd and impractical; they asserted that the results would be unbecoming or theatrical.*

*The three illustrations show a skirt and two dresses, all made simply by seaming two rectangles of fabric up the sides. Elastic bands hold them to either shoulders, bosom or waist.*

*These garments, made without cutting, are highly significant because they are not experimental but are mass-manufactured and successfully sold. Their appearance is neither reminiscent of stage costumes nor of the unhappy sartorial concoctions which go under the name of Art & Crafts. Their lapidary construction, disregarded for two thousand years, is, in fact, apparent only to the initiated.*

*Designer: Claire McCardell. Courtesy Harper's Junior.*

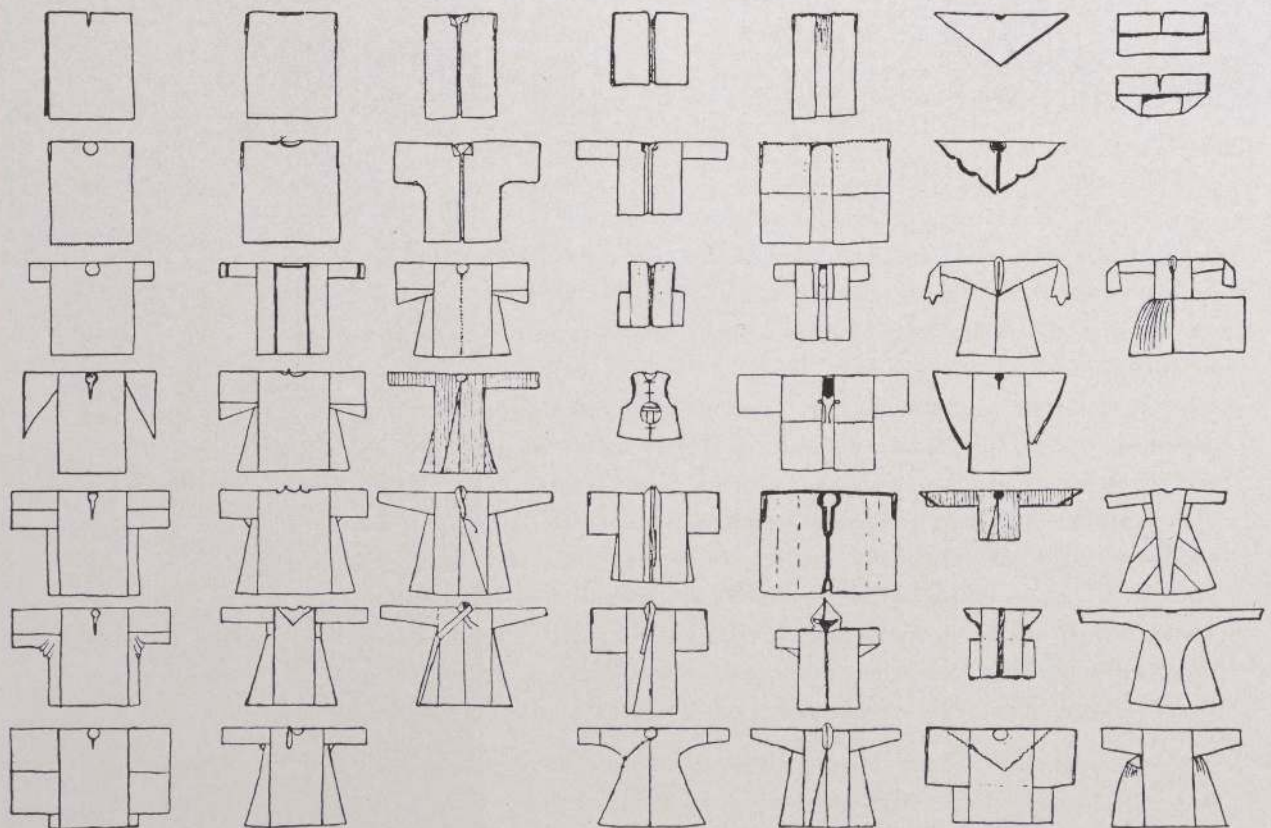


*Short coat made from one rectangle without any waste of material. Designer: Irene Schawinsky.*



absurd if our critical faculties were intact. Clothes which are not carefully treated tend to collapse. It becomes necessary to revive and reshape them before we can use them again. Everybody has at one time experienced the rush weekend guests make for the maid whose job it is to recondition their deflated garments.

Today, houses and apartments are rarely planned for the exclusive use of their owners; provisions are usually made for guest houses or guest rooms. Under modest circumstances, guest beds and guest closets are a matter of course. Sitting furniture is purchased with visitors in mind, and the dining room has a supply of linen, glass, china and silver for many diners. House guests enjoy the same comfort and the same privileges as the host—with the exception of clothes. The present Western costume with its rigid individual fit makes it impossible for people to exchange their clothes. However, this awkward situation can be easily remedied with the introduction of guest-clothes, ranging from a dinner guest's gown to a complete outfit for a weekend guest. These garments could be both pleasant and inexpensive and would need a minimum of upkeep by being foldable and easy to clean.



*Basic forms and variations of Oriental dress.*

*From Tilke, Orientalische Kostüme.*



The application of the loose fit to footwear will bring benefits similar to those enumerated of draped and wrapped clothing. To preserve its tactile sense, perfect shape and unhindered movability, the foot must not be encased in any shoe-like contraption. As a defense against cold, only hosiery should be relied on that is porous, supple and yielding. The unsightly bags we call stockings and socks, will have to make way for foot-coverings made on the principle of the glove, i.e. digital stockings. In any case, the new stockings and socks must be made for right and left feet, if we want to avoid their deforming effect on our toes.

Independent from the glove-like footcovering which can be dispensed with in the warm season, is the sole that can be held to the foot in a hundred different ways. The fastened sole, known as a sandal—which has nothing in common with the kind of foot-squeezing shoes that are commercially referred to as sandals—does not even have to follow the outline of the foot. This is a most convenient fact since it reduces footwear to very few sizes. Many nations have been aware of this advantage and exploited it fully. A traveler, visiting Japan at the turn of the century, acknowledged the superiority of the native footwear in these words: "The gheta, even when outgrown, can never cramp the toes nor compress the ankles. If the foot is too long for the clog, the heel laps over behind, but the toes do not suffer, and the use of the gheta strengthens the ankles by affording no artificial aid or support, and giving to all the muscles of foot and leg free play, with the foot in a natural position. The toes of the Japanese retain their prehensile qualities to a surprising degree, and are used, not only for grasping the foot-gear, but among mechanics almost like two supplementary hands, to aid in holding the thing worked upon. Each toe knows its work and does it, and they are not reduced to the dull uniformity of motion that characterizes the toes of a leather-shod nation."<sup>148</sup>

The modern shoe is among the articles of dress whose improvement is retarded by the fact that it is an erotic implement. The generation that will see the end of the barbarical initiation custom of putting females on high heels, and the young man whose emotions will still function without the stimulus of Cinderella's slipper, will fare better. Puritanism is not disinclined toward coarse eroticism—if it can be rationalized and diverted into commercial channels. But it seems that once allowances are made and liberties granted, attractiveness does not persist without the addition of still bolder provocations. The unrestrained and thoughtless use of body paint, seductive footgear and the almost farcical bolstering up of the breasts by modern girls and matrons alike, once were the sole privileges of harlots. The "painted woman" was indeed a euphemism of the romantic era, and high-heeled footwear has a no less disreputable past. The recognition of the prostitute's attributes as legitimate expedients in the battle of the sexes has come only with the advent of industrial society; it is withheld by the peasants of the Americas and of Europe who, in spite of their old culture, are believed to be sort of savages by the modern city-dweller.



Occasionally, shoes with a perfectly straight outline on its inner side, were made for very young people. However, a shoe which can easily accommodate all five toes, was and still is an exceptional footcovering.

Advertisement from Dry Goods Economist, 1909.



Plastic shoe, made without using a last. The shoe is directly molded to the foot, which is of singular advantage, since almost no person's feet are alike in size and shape.

Designer: Murray. Courtesy Alan E. Murray Laboratories.



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A particularly strong point is our Misses' sizes, 11½ to 2, to retail at \$2, with a handsome profit.

**THE WOLFE BROS. SHOE CO., Columbus, Ohio**



*The present type of manufactured stocking is as much to blame for misshapen feet as the shoe. The pointed sock or stocking squeezes the toes together, and the tougher the yarn—nylon, for example,—the worse the result. Stockings which permit the toes freedom of movement are not new, but they are unavailable today.*

*Below, digital socks designed and manufactured by Gustav Jäger, early twentieth century. These socks were sold in the United States; they are, even in their woolen version, esthetically superior to our current footbags.*

*Collection New York Museum of Costume Art.*

Sutro







*Socks with divided toes are not exclusively Japanese. They were worn in antiquity, as this portrait of a well-dressed matron proves. She is wearing bejewelled sandals over red socks.*

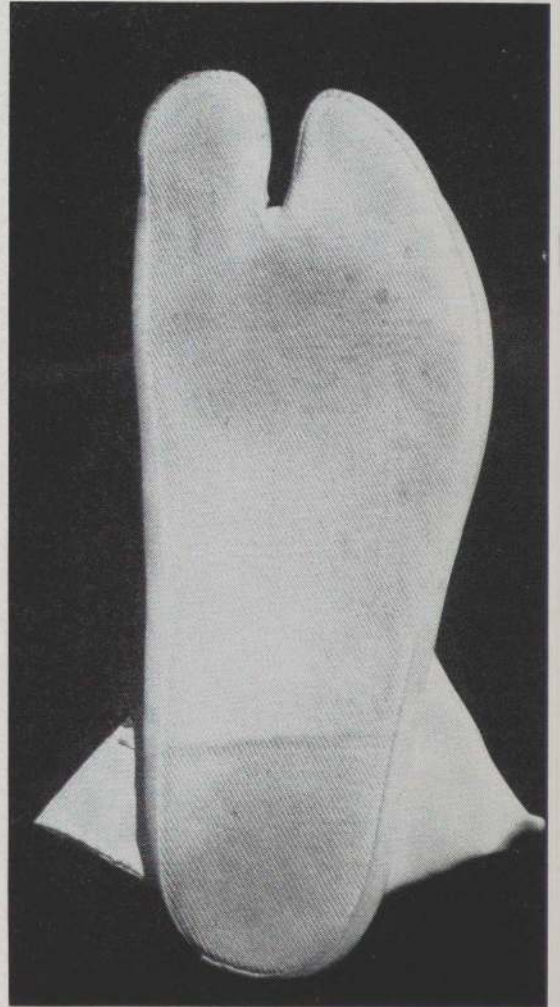
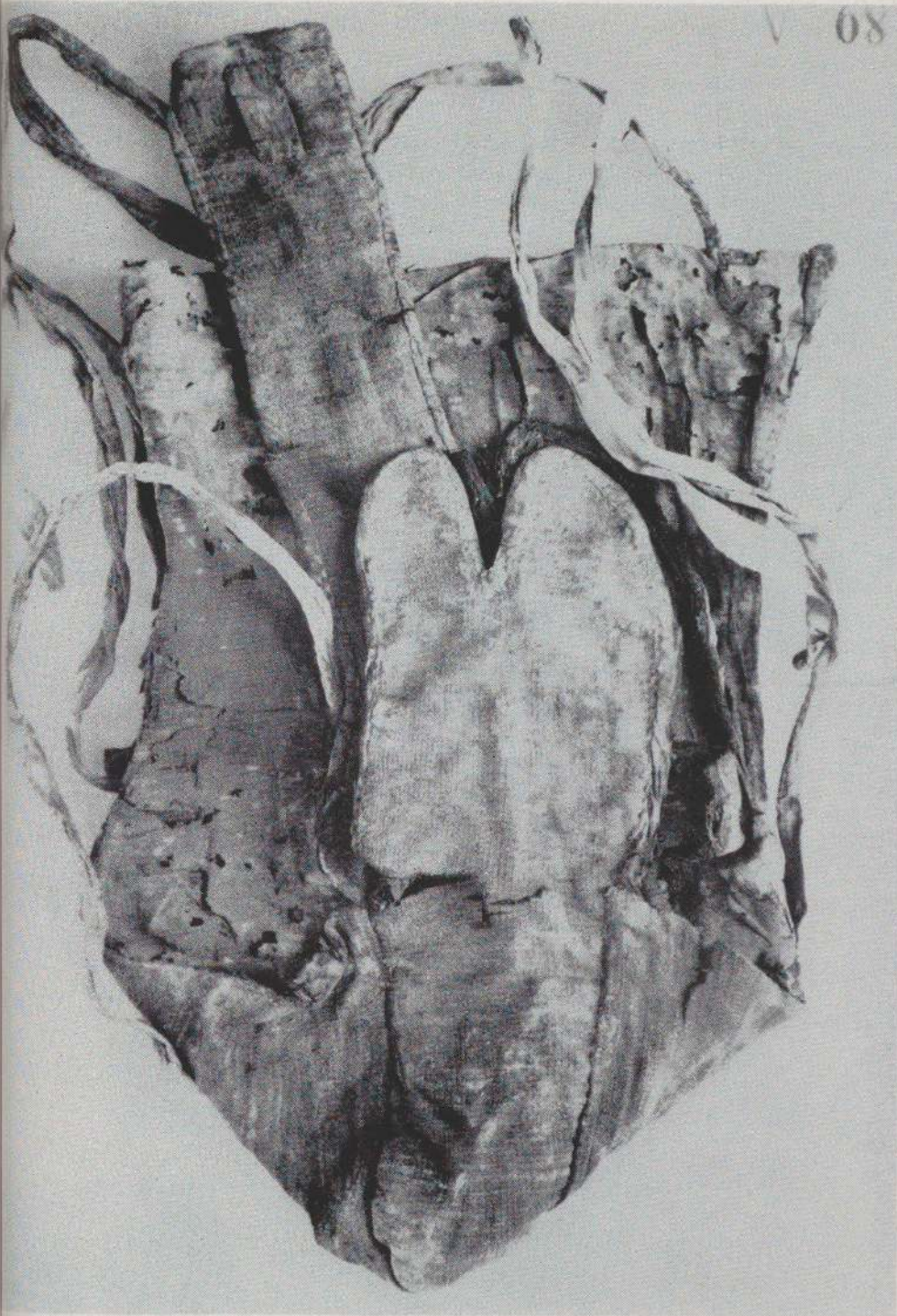
*From a shroud, second century A.D.*

*Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

*Below: Knitted sock with divided toes, probably dating from the fifth century A.D., found in Egypt. Museum of Trier.*







*According to the Metropolitan Museum this photograph represents an archer's glove found in the tomb of Tut-ankh-amun. Actually, it is a divided-toe sock with attached legging, probably the oldest known footcovering with separate toes. A tabi, the traditional Japanese sock, is shown at right.*

*Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.*





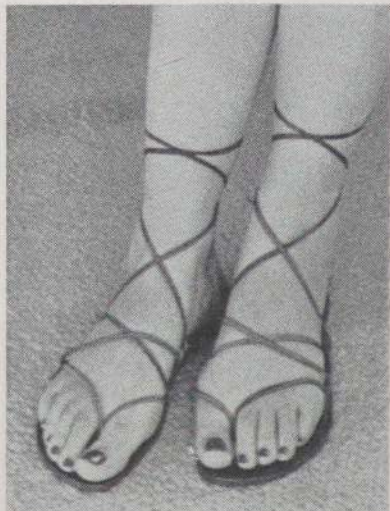
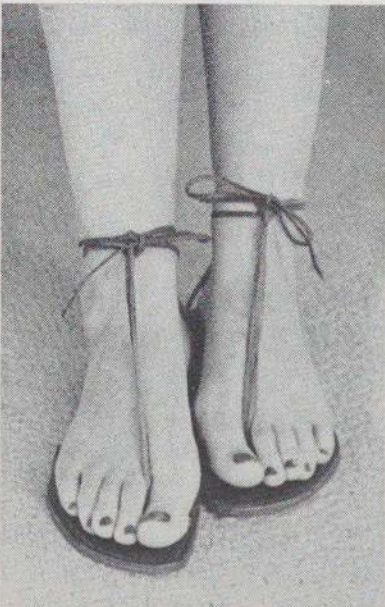
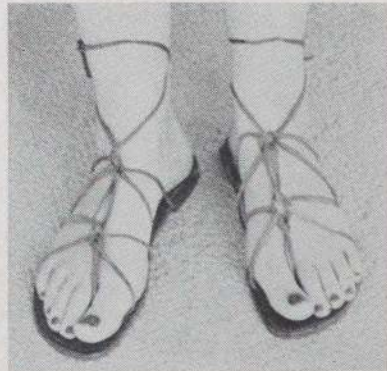
*Some original inhabitants of America wore the classic foot-covering, the sandal. This Basketmakers' sandal, made of fine yucca fiber cord and decorated in red and black, shows as fine a craftsmanship as Egyptian papyrus sandals. Arizona, about seventh century A.D.*

*Courtesy University of Colorado.*

*Modern man and woman, due to their using box-like coverings, never acquire the ability to wind a turban, wrap a cloak, or lace a sandal. The six ways of tying the same rustic sandal demonstrate the advantage of variable apparel over the immutable sort. Author's design.*









From habit, the female foot has come to be regarded as unpalatable, both esthetically and erotically. Not till the spices of stocking and heel are added is it worthy of inspection. In his *Voyage en Orient* the connoisseur and poet, Gerard de Nerval writes of the "unsuspected charm" of unclad feet: "Bent back on the couch, the feet of these ladies were unacquainted with the use of stockings. This custom adds to their beauty a degree of seduction which we hardly imagine." Because no footwear compresses their toes, Gerard adds, their feet are as charming as their hands. "Henna-painted toe-nails, and anklets as exuberant as bracelets, are perfecting the grace and charm of that portion of a woman which, amongst us, is too often sacrificed to the glory of the shoe-makers."<sup>149</sup>

Uninhibited use of foot decoration, emphasizing the equal status of hand and foot, would result in a new awareness of the long forgotten toes. The contention that the upper part of the foot be covered when leaving the house is another one of the absurd rules of correct dress. The present rudimentary female shoe—it looks very sketchy but it holds the toes in its clutch like any martial boot—is no protection against dirt and rain. A clean-cut distinction between outdoor and indoor footwear ought to be a matter of course. The present use of overshoes is a step in the right direction though it has not contributed to the improvement of footwear proper. At home, the covering of the feet should be motivated purely by a desire for decoration, since protection will become unnecessary. Floor material, pleasant to the touch, of a temperature we are able to control will provide for such comfort.

Imperative, and second in importance only to the problem of footwear, is the abolition of our present concept of underwear. It may have occurred to some people that underwear, as we know it today, is about the most pitiful chapter in modern dress. For the benefit of those benign souls to whom such heretic thoughts are foreign, a few points shall be enumerated to strengthen the argument. To begin with, underwear has not yet made the grade; it is subclothing, obscene to the Philistine. The average man and woman see in it the summit of sartorial eroticism. Any attempt to rob him or her of this stimulant or to curtail their gratifications will provoke ire.\*

"What a world of romance attaches to the word 'underclothing' when it indicates that worn by woman! And how completely devoid of anything but boredom when it means that worn by men."<sup>150</sup> It ranges from the teasingly piquant to the unspeakably vulgar. Compared to the outer layers of dress, underwear is altogether unmentionable. No wonder that costume histories written before the turn of the century, badly neglect the story of intimate clothing. Nevertheless, female underwear has for uncounted generations absorbed the interest of the male and stimulated his sensorial faculties. Our stress on it is exemplified in the absurd preoccupation with the *trousseau*.

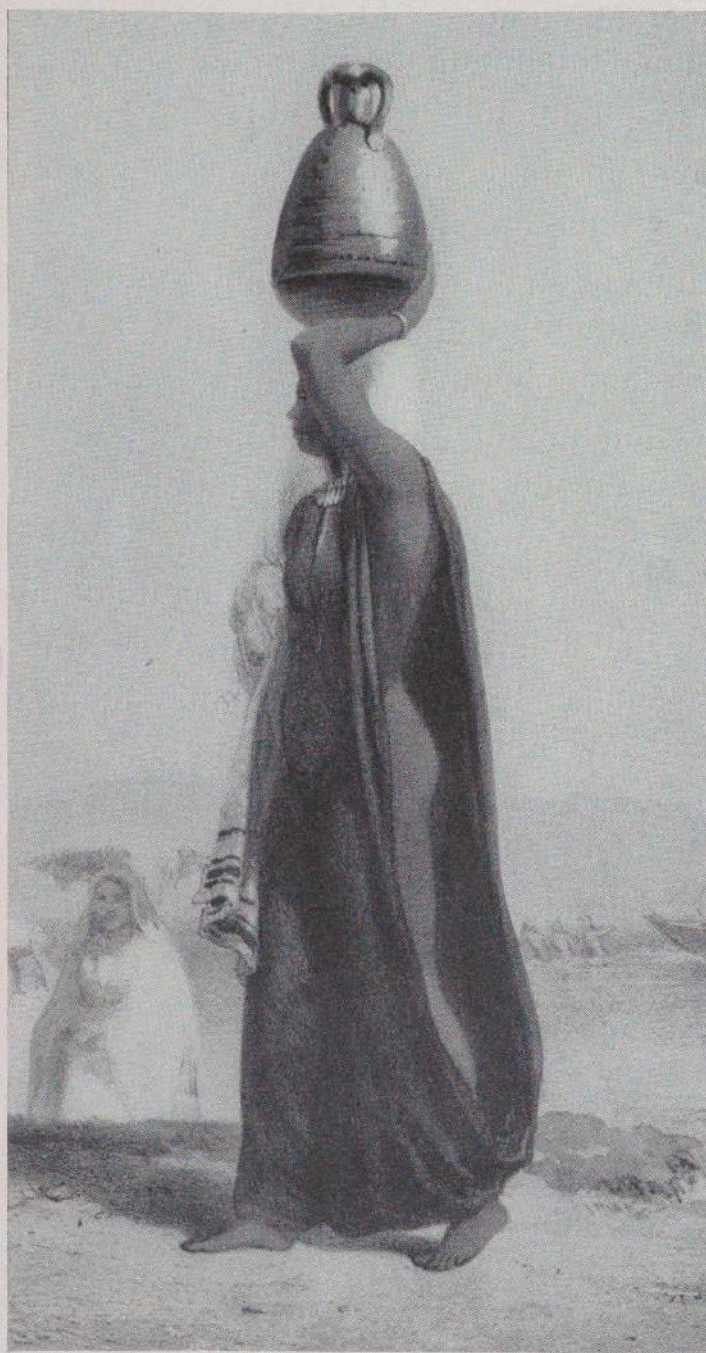
*\*We should remember that female underwear was unknown during the middle ages. Such patently decorous objects as drawers, ironically enough, were introduced into our wardrobe by prostitutes. Drawers are Oriental garments, and were first worn in Italy.*





*A mitt stocking that covers the leg but leaves the toes free. Author's design.*





*This garment of a "female of the middle class drawing water from the Nile" is interesting in more than one respect.*

*When in 1851 James Augustus St. John published this picture in an unobjectionable "Oriental Album", he took pains to alleviate his and his readers' conscience by assuring that the illustration was but an artist's phantasy. He denied that he had ever seen a woman dressed in "so strange and fantastic a garment as that which is here represented, open from the shoulder to the ankle, and yet fastened below." Even if St. John knew better, he owed this apology to a Victorian audience.*



Half a century earlier, the English reader seemed to have been of a stronger constitution. An Egyptian travel book, translated from the French, tells that the costume in question was commonly worn by the women of the lower class. The author, Sonnini, marveled at the garment which was "open on each side from the arm-pits to the knees, so that the motions of the body easily admit of its being partially seen." Sonnini, being a physician, and probably hardened by having been exposed to the generous female dresses of the *directoire*, found that Arab women had good sense. "This method of half-dressing themselves, so that the air circulates immediately over the body, and cools every part of it, is very suitable in a country where thick and tight clothes would render the heat insupportable. But the European monks discovered some indecency in a dress which afforded no suspicion of the kind to any person." The unwelcome missionaries compelled their converts to dress in warm and tight-fitting clothes, which, as the writer remarks, was "a real indiscretion in a country where the mere name of Christian is a crime."

Evidently, this dress does not fit into any of our categories of modesty and immodesty, current and obsolete. The ingenious way in which it offers protection against the heat is unknown to us. Bare of decorative elements in the conventional sense, it is nonetheless the pith of clothing.

To those curious souls who anxiously scrutinize the horizon for the redeeming "dress of the future," and to those no less anxious ones who look with mixed feelings towards the much prophesied inevitability of nakedness, this garment of an Arab woman is half the answer.

Dress does indeed have a purpose beyond its utilitarian functions of covering our imagined sordidness and giving protection—to provide us with an intensification of our selves. Every dancer thrives on the stimulus imparted by moving dress—a loose dress, of course, which has movement and inertia of its own. This awareness of one's body through dress is physically gratifying. And it is utterly different from the kind of sensation imparted by a flopping or tight-fitting dress which stimulates awareness of dress, not of one's body.



Probably no other but modern industrial civilization produced apparel as hideous as our underclothing.

From an advertisement, 1903.



Transparent outer-garments, such as blouses, are definitely in the category of unesthetic dress. Transparent clothing is meant to be worn upon the skin—as are nightgowns. It is grossly insulting to the eye to discover under the sheer blouse an obtrusive system of straps and hooks, dragnets and hammocks for the control of obstinate flesh. If women *must* show their underwear through transparent or semi-transparent clothing, then it should be of such character that it completes and aids the outer layer. Currently designed underwear is, esthetically, on the level with men's suspenders and garters.

The layers of woman's clothes that are not intended to be displayed publicly occupy a prominent place in the erotic phantasy. The "*toilette*," the putting on and shedding of clothes in successive stages have always figured in pictorial art. The charm of these scenes is in their intimacy. Commercial enterprise, however, created a spectacle for the masses, based solely on the *voyeur* instinct: the spectacle of a woman whose performance is limited to divesting herself step by step of her multiple wrappings. It is significant that such exhibit draws an audience in a puritan country only. Besides, the female exhibitor whose "art" sheds light into the souls of the lame and loose, enjoys the popularity of a national heroine.

Side by side with obscenity exists much squeamishness. The opinions about the right division in outer and inner clothing are hopelessly confused. The man's system of onion-like layers leaves the point of discrimination debatable. Correctness and license, being a question of modesty, are determined by circumstance; the age of the person, the place and the occasion have much bearing on the question of propriety. An undershirt may be an adequate cover for the upper part of the suburban movie-goer, while two additional envelopes, shirt and coat, are essential at the mundane hotel or restaurant. The incongruous situation of the double status of a man's shirt has been mentioned already: The military shirt enjoys the rank of an outer garment, while the civilian shirt, though perfectly identical in every detail, is considered an intimate piece of clothing. This muddled state of affairs could be straightened out with but some intelligent agreement. By simply conferring upon the shirt the degree of decency an enormous improvement of our well-being could be obtained without calling upon the genius of the designer.

There is nothing irrevocable about underclothing, and the idea that the layer closest to our skin should be regarded as ambiguous or hideous becomes every day more intolerable. Already, the difference between a sun- or water-bathing suit and certain underwear is purely one of designation. By and large, they are both made from similar material, are of the same "styles," made with the same tools; only our antiquated modesty insists that they belong to distinct categories. Again, the promotion of the *négligé* into a full-fledged and respectable dress would prove equally feasible. There is no reason why it should be forever pink, dull, and hideous.

Apart from merely shifting the classification of apparel and preparing a relaxation of our rigid psychological attitude, there is the widest field for



*With wartime restrictions lifted in 1946,  
metal soon crept back into underwear.*

*Photograph courtesy Life magazine.*



the creation of new forms and new types of clothing. The integration of the varied articles of clothing is still lacking; in fact, this problem has not yet dawned upon either manufacturer or designer. Today, an unreasonable specialization badly limits the horizon of the expert. The "creation" of new shapes is in the hands of people who have only the vaguest idea of what their task could be in a more favorable spiritual climate. Altogether their disposition is one of fear or unfriendliness towards any intelligent innovation or critical appreciation.

Our sleepy ways are illustrated by the pocket system. The need for always carrying innumerable objects with us, is a penalty of our civilization only. Still, the solution appears to be rather simple—a single container may hold the scattered contents of all our pockets. Women's handbags are a half-hearted attempt in this direction; they are however organized on the principle of the ash-can. Toolbags and businessmen's briefcases are better examples. The disadvantage of a loose bag to be carried by hand, could easily be remedied if an attached strap would enable us to hang it on to the shoulder.





*Glove construction designed by Merry Hull in 1938 and based on engineering principles applied to anatomical function of the hand. This glove consists of two almost identical pieces for palm and back part, joined, box-like, by a continuous wall. The ingenuity of construction becomes apparent by comparing it with the conventionally cut glove.*

*Courtesy Daniel Hays Company.*

*Above left, similar construction with seamless palm of a glove several thousand years old.*

*From Carter, The Tomb of Tut-ankh-amun.*



Southern European and Latin-American countries, where the carrying of considerable loads is a daily necessity, have developed ingenious contraptions, worth studying. The thoughtless but widely held opinion that the shoulder-hung bag is only for females, seems hardly worth discussing. The virility of postmen remained unimpaired by years of letterbag carrying; and the soldier, equipped with a shoulder bag, does not protest against this sort of effeminacy.

The understanding of dress has been kept on a low level by the attitude of museums, costume collectors and writers on costume. Clothes, if deemed admissible for dress exhibitions or costume books, are invariably show-pieces. They are of the overdecorated, expensive and least representative sort. Nothing is more disconcerting and more misleading than the museum curator's taste for the precious. For instance, an exhibition devoted to peasant dress, does not necessarily tell us anything about peasants. There is little food for the mind, only glitter for the eye. Instead of the daily bread of dress that we piously connect with sweat and toil, a parade of monstrous wedding-cakes faces us. To the city-bred youngster who knows a cow only from pictures, the elaborate peasant costumes do not suggest anything but dancing and merry-making. This idea conforms with the film industry's version of life in the country. Since a museum to most people is the traditional refuge from a dull Sunday afternoon, it has evidently been felt that its exhibits should deal with the world of Sunday.



*The dress of the poorer classes always fails to appeal to the compilers of costume books. This outfit of a bath servant which adorns the initial of a sixteenth century bible is attractive in its simplicity and unpretentiousness. Yet, throughout the centuries, makers of clothes have only copied the stuffy attire of the rich.*







*From New York Times Magazine, 1945.  
Courtesy New York Times.*

A page of the Koran taken from a fourteenth century Arabic manuscript was the source for this rayon Onondaga print. Fritzi Reckendorf, designer, followed the original, giving the fabric the realistic appearance of an illuminated page. The draped scarf dress embroidered in sequins is by Adele Simpson.



The lack of imagination on the part of educational institutions is partly responsible for our ignorance and apathy towards clothing, modern and ancient, domestic and foreign. Workday clothes of the peoples of Europe and Asia, of the South and Central Americas, are often surprisingly ingenious. Folk dress has been interminably ransacked for ornamental detail; but its ingenuity and wisdom have yet to be understood. We cannot expect such understanding from the professional clothing designer who lives in a business world unconducive to critical or creative thought. Neither are schools for the training of dress designers of much value; their present purpose lies in the conditioning of the individual to a profession where successful promotion of merchandise makes up for the lack of ideas.

Educational institutes which recently became actively interested in contemporary dress have ostentatiously proclaimed the businessman's philosophy. The massive institution of the Metropolitan Museum of Art takes great pains to perpetuate the fallacy that today's clothing is but a stylistic variation of historic costume. In a recent exhibition of modern printed fabrics, the Museum made a point in showing how art of the past is supposed to give a "lift" to the "creative" designer. The display culminated in a dress print that was purely and simply, a reproduction of a page from the Koran. As might be expected, the Museum had no intention to desecrate a sacred book. The idea that people who do not care to hear the word of the prophet should at least sit on it, could only spring from the illiterate and immature super-salesman, and it is of little importance whether it first alighted in the head of an "art director" or of a museum's director.



*Turk with foldable rain hat.*

*From Vecellio, De gli habiti antichi etc., 1590.*



## *Invocation of democracy*

“What makes a brilliant party? Clothes.”

Emily Post (Mrs. Price Post), *Etiquette*,  
*The Blue Book of Social Usage*, 1940.

There is some poetic justice in the fact that American ready-to-wear originated as clothing for slaves. As early as 1830 outfits for sailors were mass-produced; but not until ten years later did civilians derive profit from this industrial innovation. Hereafter, ready-to-wear clothing was made for the Negro laborers in the Southern plantations.<sup>151</sup> As museums care only for the noble kind of dress, we do not possess samples of the first slave fashions. When the Civil War cut off the manufacturers from their outlet in the South, many went bankrupt. Others were saved by large government orders for the army. From then on, the ready-to-wear business profited by every major economic catastrophe. The depressions of 1873, 1893 and 1907 drove more and more people into buying the despised “slop clothes.”<sup>152</sup> Today, more than ninety-nine per cent of the population buy ready-made clothes, they never see a tailor or a shoemaker. Unfortunately, *if* we subscribe to the prevailing taste in sartorial art, we must realize that clothes have to fit the wearer. A suit or an overcoat needs several fittings if it should look presentable at all. The fitting is the penance we have to pay for our insistence on wearing tailored clothes.

The expensiveness of our clothing led to the idea of its being the best and finest. There is a moment when such illusions crumble. A trip to Rio de Janeiro or Buenos Aires is most revealing, unless one is utterly incapable of observation or hopelessly conceited. The tourist realizes soon that his cherished idea of being the best dressed man or best dressed woman is mistaken. His mass-manufactured articles of clothing do not stand comparison with the carefully wrought products of the foreign country where the tailor is still the professional maker of clothes.



There is no road back to the pre-industrial era; the sequence of events cannot be reversed. The knowledge and experience of the craftsman has dried up and cannot be replaced. Machines are our heritage and machines will have to do the work in the future. Unfortunately, the clothing manufacturer expects them to do the impossible: to produce tailor-made clothing. The first businessman who is intelligent enough to realize such absurdity and to correct the mistake will be a benefactor as great as the inventor of electric light. Imitation goods are only desirable in primitive society. The day the consumer learns discrimination, no sales campaign will help to sell the substitute.

It happens often enough that clothing escapes the jurisdiction of fashion people and exists simply as a utility. There should be more recognition of the fact that dress in our society belongs to the necessities of life. It has not yet occurred that electric bulbs are sold at fancy prices, styled to fashions, or suppressed for fashion's sake. These utilities are held to be essential for the smooth working of our civilization. Why then should we not extend such gratifying status to at least a few articles of clothing? Why should a type of shoes which proved to be less nauseating than others not be available just because fashion decrees new ways of squeezing our feet?

Yet even if there were enough good will among the manufacturers to remedy the misery of today's clothing, the first sobering thought would go to the designer, so-called. This designer is about the most unhappy and unnecessary species of the day. He is uncreative by profession, unprepared for any task but copying, and unaware of the possibilities of his profession. There are practically no schools to give him an adequate training, because there are no adequate teachers. The designer lives on what he calls his inspiration—a good and wholesome word which, by common consent and abuse, was perverted into the contrary of its original meaning. Inspiration, as the designer understands it, is far from the sublime moment of spiritual communion with divinity; to him it simply means the copying of insignificant and meaningless details from past epochs or foreign countries, which he cements together into that *pastiche* called THE STYLE.

Unless we uphold the sacred tradition of waiting for other peoples' inventions and creations which we can conveniently copy, adapt and adopt, we must set out to investigate our faculties of invention, if it is only to prove to ourselves that we haven't been yet reduced to parrots and adding machines.

We cannot expect nor wish for a reversion to earlier stages of development in clothing, such as traditional dress. Traditional or "fixed" dress in its wider sense exists under circumstances which are almost absent in our civilization. Today, the costumes of racial or regional groups are mostly picturesque anachronisms; generally, they are national uniforms, changing slowly, sometimes remaining stationary for entire generations. There is however a type of fixed costume that has survived in spite of the leveling influence of modern communications. This is the immutable (or practically im-



mutable) type of occupational dress. In America, quite satisfactory models of working clothes have been developed. The overall, for instance, is a genuine example of fixed dress in a modish world.

Not every occupational dress is of the highest functional and esthetic order. Most of them suffer from the general inadequacies characteristic of modern clothing in general. The uniform of the nurse is more symbolic than efficient, more impressive than comfortable. The uniform of the waiter is an outstanding absurdity. In a quite different category, but equally inconsistent, are the special dresses for the various types of sports. It is altogether doubtful whether we have any attire which is in harmony with a specific sporting activity. The American horseman is convinced that tight knee-breeches and tight boots are necessary and essential for riding regardless of conditions. But the inhabitant of the desert seems to fare better in such lady-like attire as sandals and flowing skirts. It seems that the meticulous distinction between riding habits, tennis and golf clothes, is particularly fostered by the clothes merchant. However, the disappearance of such characteristic apparel as the bicycling dress of the nineties gives us reason to expect that the specialization of sports- and play-clothes will gradually come to an end.

The supporters of fashion assert repeatedly that those who want to abolish fashion fail to grasp its nature and its proper laws. They infer that the existence of rapidly changing dress fashions is the infallible symptom of a sound economy. Declaring that economic and spiritual stability require the stimulation of short-lived sartorial vogues, they refuse to make a critical evaluation of clothes that goes beyond their momentary business interests.

Common misconceptions and national prejudice have stood in the way of understanding the clothing problem. Modern dress ranks in importance with food and shelter. It has become indispensable for social acceptance and self-assurance. Yet we have no control over this vital item. We set standards of excellence for food, medicaments, rent. But dress, because of its dual nature of delicious nonsense and bare essential, has escaped rationalization. Fashion profiteers have made the most of this situation.

"It is clearly incumbent upon us," suggests Flügel, "to devise some system that shall partake as far as possible of the benefits of both 'fixed' and 'modish' costume, while suffering as little as may be from their respective faults. Costume must be freed, alike from the ruinous competition and commercialism of fashion, and from the unadaptable conservatism of 'fixed' dress. Reasonable consideration of ends and means, together with an appeal to the highest standards of contemporary taste, must replace a frantic search for novelty at any cost or a blind adherence to tradition."<sup>153</sup> In the case of the United States, there is no danger to be trapped in the folds of traditional dress for the simple reason that there is no local tradition. This would give the country considerable advantage over South American or South European nations. All depends on how quickly and how completely clothing can be wrested from unrestricted commercial influence.



"American influence in China. The United States has given advertising methods as well as Western clothes to China. The painted billboard of the wall of the shop shown in the picture below tells the Chinese of the district that if they support the local wool industry, they will be able to make handsome clothes, like those pictured, for mama, papa and the kiddies. Etc."

Photograph and caption courtesy United China Relief.



There is little danger that the industry which furnishes us with clothing would suffer from the decline of artificially engineered fashions; the economic stability of the garment trade has been disrupted more than once when fashion underwent radical change. Indeed, this trade will fare better in the future if it were not compelled to pay attention to the antics of the season.

A truly monumental task awaits the makers of garments. Technological progress and scientific discoveries have hardly ever been applied to our body coverings. Men's clothes are museum pieces for anthropological collections. No "improvements" will amount to anything if the principles of clothing are ignored. The army of professional designers is useless. It would seem logical that the clothing industry should take the initiative in organizing boards for basic clothing standards, or educational institutions for the exploration of contemporary needs and technical experimentation. The lack of such institutions was felt during the war, when the inadequacy of the outfits for fighting men and industrial workers became evident. The idea that in peace time we should depend on the illiteracy of the fashion copyist, is as unpleasant as it is unintelligent.



The training of the new designer can be easily formulated; the difficulties arise when such program has to be reconciled with a mentality that is strongly opposed to serious study. The average man's mind is averse to any mental burden; illiteracy and semi-illiteracy are almost valued as civic virtues. The educated individual is distrusted, or pitied as a social failure. The very first step in the direction of acquiring knowledge, the learning of languages, is to this day regarded as the exclusive task of non-English-speaking peoples. On the other hand, the majority of industrial professions require periods of instruction that can be counted in mere weeks or even days. No wonder that extensive learning is popularly regarded as a waste of time and, consequently, a loss of money.

Educational establishments suffer from this prejudice: Standards of learning are being lowered constantly to attract students. It is not surprising, therefore, that selective systems are not favored and talent is not judged a high criterion of acceptance. The advocates of this state of things point out—quite rightly—that the possession of talent is irrelevant, that it has more drawbacks than advantages in life. The facts confirm such opinion. The most successful industrial designers are, as a rule, businessmen with no creative faculties of their own. Elizabeth Hawes, the voice in the wilderness, has no kind words for the American dress designers, to many of whom—the successful ones—she ascribes no artistic ability whatsoever.<sup>154</sup>

The next question that arises is whether it is reasonable to cultivate talent at all if it is only put to such menial work as ghost-writing, ghost-designing and the dozen other cheap ghost services. The fashion business can very well do without ideas because it merchandises what at best can be called recreations. Inventions are indeed so rare that they seem to be purely incidental. Nonetheless, there is an eternal preoccupation with the artistic and commercial property of fashion designs. Adequate protection of design property is lacking in this country and, because it is not illegal under present laws, theft is perpetrated on a gigantic scale.

The United States has not joined other countries in protecting original designs effectively. France, a leader not only in the domain of dress but also in legislation, recognized the designer's right to authorship by law more than two hundred years ago. Of course, such laws did not prevent clothes dealers from selling millions of American goods with counterfeit foreign labels.<sup>155</sup> In this country, the introduction of effective copyrights for designs was refused on ethical grounds. This did not deter American businessmen from making use of other countries' facilities for registering designs.

Copying is recognized as "a dominant factor in our economic life." In the world of fashion, copying is such a matter of everyday occurrence that any original thought cannot but cause distrust and hostility. "Dealers," writes Nystrom, an American author of books on fashion, ". . . patronize the copyists rather than the originators. As a consequence, it is virtually impossible for any creator or originator to recover even the costs of his efforts



to prepare new designs, to say nothing of making any net profit."<sup>156</sup> He reasons: "The slow progress in artistic designing made in this country is believed by many to be due to the dominance of the copyist."<sup>157</sup> Evidently, creative thinking and working should not be encouraged if results are assessed at so low a rate.

Fashion's most glaring aspect is waste. This does not impress everybody as a negative quality. The production of machine-made goods, which is not always a means to fill the needs of the consumer but an end in itself, depends on the intensity of waste. As buying of goods is more and more becoming the favorite self-expression of the individual, and esteem is based on both his willingness and capacity to acquire manufactured commodities, waste is not only regarded as perfectly legitimate but assumes the significance of a patriotic duty. Explanation for this paradox may be found in antiquated traits and habits which have remained intact in spite of their being highly irrational and in opposition to the rest of the world. English-speaking countries alone uphold an archaic and cumbersome system of weights and measurements which results in losses of money and markets.

Perhaps, since modern civilization gives so little satisfaction, the pleasure of extravagant waste makes up for its many disadvantages. In the clothing field this argument has been advanced with persistence. Waste in clothing, though repulsive to the innate taste, is ingratiating to one's self-assurance.

There still remains to be explained why waste is more acceptable in dress fashions than in any others. To be sure, such recent trades as so-called interior decorating were invented for the express purpose of speeding up the transition of commercial vogues or, more generally speaking, of introducing ephemeral styles into the furnishings of homes and public establishments. For self-advertisement however, dress is far superior to any investments in immobile ornament.

In spite of fashion's undisputed rule, its promoters never neglect to stress the utilitarian aspect of each new fad, though its expected short-livedness should exclude rationalization *a priori*. The sociologist Veblen observed that "in all innovations in dress, each added or altered detail strives to avoid instant condemnation by showing some ostensible purpose, at the time that the requirement of conspicuous waste prevents the purposefulness of these innovations from becoming anything more than a somewhat transparent pretense. Even in its freest flights, fashion rarely if ever gets away from a simulation of some ostensible use. The ostensible usefulness of the fashionable details of dress, however, is always so transparent a make-believe, and their substantial futility presently forces itself so baldly upon our attention as to become unbearable, and then we take refuge in a new style. But the new style must conform to the requirements of reputable wastefulness and futility. Its futility presently becomes as odious as that of its predecessor; and the only remedy which the law of waste allows us is to seek relief in some new construction, equally futile and equally untenable. Hence the essential ugliness and the unceasing change of fashionable attire."<sup>158</sup>

"The Directoire Suit may obsolete 6,000,000 garments now hanging in closets" . . . says Tobe in July issue of *Women's Reporter*. Each month our famous fashion editor calls the turn on coming trends via ten-to-sixteen-page Portfolio Report . . . very valuable for people who cannot afford to *guess* on what's coming in the fashion world.

*Advertisement from The New York Times, 1946. Courtesy Reporter Publications.*





*The nurse says: "Don't cry, darling . . . It's only your mother." Drawing by Vértés, 1939.*

*Courtesy Harper's Bazaar.*



*Detail from a prehistoric painting in the cave of Cogul, Spain.*

*From Obermaier, El hombre fósil.*



Veblen thought that the fashions of the day are held to be beautiful because they are different and as such come as a deliverance from the preceding unsufferable fashions. "Our transient attachment to whatever happens to be the latest rests on other than esthetic grounds, and lasts only until our abiding esthetic sense has had time to assert itself and reject the latest indigestible contrivance."<sup>159</sup>

Historians think of clothes as documents from which we can extract the philosophy of an epoch or the state of mind of an individual. This means that we can trust dress to be a faithful mirror of individual and collective aspirations. It further implies that dress is the result of a specific way of life rather than one of its determinants. Consequently, scholars and laymen alike have earnestly proclaimed that the evolution of dress and its minor oscillations of passing fashions obey unknown but superior forces which to combat or divert would merely show gross incomprehension on our part. All apologies for the existence of fashions are in fact built on the strength of this argument.

The nature of clothes is, no doubt, irritatingly complex; and the theories advanced by its students, though enlightening, do not allow an exact verdict. But it is foolish to join the chorus of those who maintain that the laws of clothes are unfathomably obscure. Clothes are man-made, and so are all the justifications for wearing them. Moreover, if modern clothes are as much a reflection of our times as were the costumes of old of theirs, we have no reason to be flattered.

The dominance of the short-lived and commercially promoted fashion is not limited to the field of clothing. Today, it pervades nearly every phase of life. It determines our domestic environment from the pitch of the roof to the shape of the ash-tray. It colors literary and political trends. Under the bombardment of commercial propaganda, music, plastic and culinary arts disintegrate into musical tastes, artistic vogues, food habits, to be conveniently remolded according to one amorphous denominator—the day's fashion.

In static countries where an age-old culture constitutes an element of inertia, tradition is strong enough to defeat the hysterical fits of fashion. Countries with highest standards of life and smallest social and economic inequalities, such as Sweden or Switzerland, have been relatively impervious to fashion promotion. They have achieved, at least partly, what in this country is still a matter of optimistic speculation—the standardization of quality in the field of useful objects. In this way, the most satisfactory forms of glass and silver-ware, textiles, lighting fixtures and furniture, have entered the cultural heritage of the nation. Many tools, like scissors, plane, skis and snowshoes, do not show a marked difference throughout the centuries. They are essentially the same in all continents and have preserved their pure form. It is not too much to ask that a few useful objects of good form should be saved from the chaos of taste and made permanently available.



Such an improvement in our environment and in the tools of living would affect our wardrobe as a matter of course. There is no reason why the design of such utilitarian articles as raincoats and umbrellas should not be stabilized until, and only until, such design is superseded by a more satisfactory one. The list of utility clothes and related articles can be enlarged ad libitum. However, little benefit will come from such privileges if we cannot free ourselves from modern dress-conventions and from the fear that results from their violation. The finest and most practical hat becomes an absurdity if we forget that it has to serve a purpose. The foreigner is seldom aware that the sun-hat wearing American is subjected to tribal rites, the observance of which are jealously guarded by the local hatters. The wearing of straw hats is prescribed and tolerated within an exact time limit only. No male dares to be seen with a straw hat prior to Decoration Day or after Labor Day. In the conflict between comfort and submission to the rules of the clan, the respect for the latter wins easily.

Modern society might gain considerably if basic categories of clothing that escape the jurisdiction of fashion people could be defined. Such categories exist already in the form of work clothes, infants' clothes, and underwear devoid of erotic content. The next, most desirable thing might be anatomically correct foot coverings.

The dealer in fashions will deride such proposals as utopia, or he may impute dictatorial tendencies. Utopia in clothing, or as we should call it, the absence of dress fashions, can be found in this world among peoples who have an old enough cultural heritage to benefit from it. Only the white race has adopted the artificial rotation of clothing fashions and tries to convince the others of its advantages.

If we are willing to resign ourselves to the businessman's world, we may expect present methods in the clothing trade to persist indefinitely. The world's storehouse of picturesque costumes is well stocked to provide for the next thousand years the little trimmings, the "silhouettes," the simulation of creation. Increasing infantilization is the best guaranty for preserving the passiveness of the consumer. Psychologists have warned us that we are becoming more and more like children, long before we reach our second childhood. That, in spite of creating imposing institutions of learning, the country has become a nursery. The regular ingestion of moronic food like the average moving picture and the national literature of the comic strip, is supplemented by the babytalk of the fashion editor and fashion advertiser. There is, of course, a minority of uncontaminated humans with their minds intact, but minorities have always been unpopular. As one writer has expressed his concern over the accelerated process of demoralization: "Accepting the democratic principle that the individual, no matter how gifted, must be subordinate to the welfare of the mass, mankind is forgetting that the destruction of conditions which make it possible for superior individuals to impose their tastes upon society means the destruction of any really desirable way of life for the race."<sup>100</sup>



*American mass production, 1874. Courtesy The Bettman Archive.*



The people employed in the business of making or spreading fashion have persistently declared—with a pinch of apology—that fashion is a token of democracy. A million times repeated, this contention has become ingrown into the mind of a nation. It is somehow fitting that behind its glamorous façade there is the most pitiful story of a trade. The history of the garment workers reads like a vulgar ballad. All the clichés of earthly misery can be extracted from the record of what has been appropriately called the most degraded profession.<sup>161</sup>



At the beginning of the century, seventy, eighty and more hours of work per week were the rule in the dress industry.<sup>162</sup> Workshops lacked the most elementary hygienic provisions, the speed of work was back breaking, the wages microscopic. Workers were old at thirty, but foreign slave labor was abundant. Newly arrived immigrants, ignorant of the native language and unaware of their new privileges, constituted an unlimited supply of labor which steadily reduced the production cost.<sup>163</sup> The introduction of more machines brought competition and still lower wages plus unemployment.

In 1909, these subhuman conditions led to an uproar, and improvement followed eventually. Native workers entered the profession, but the skilled tailor disappeared fast. Whereas formerly a craftsman had to undergo several years of apprenticeship, the operations of mass-production could be learned in as many days, or, quite often, in a few hours. In the thirties, the conditions of the clothing workers deteriorated rapidly. Work got more and more irregular; the trade had become what is called a "seasonal" trade. With the "seasons," the periods of employment, growing shorter with every year, the worker's insecurity increased and his performance bore ever less resemblance to a tailor's work. A craft had disintegrated.

Today, the fashion business is a major industry. In a society where the acquisition of money is acknowledged as a genuine and independent profession, it seems also fitting that financial standing should be expressed sartorially. The restricted expenditure in male dress has shifted the emphasis of advertising the pecuniary status to female dress with its practically unlimited display of expensive ornament. Veblen has argued that the theory of woman's dress clearly includes the implication that the woman was the celebrated ornament of the household, while her dress reflected the wealth of her master. The present status of woman as, at least theoretically, an equal of man caused drastic curtailment of ornament and nearly brought masculine austerity into the working woman's attire.

The survival of the sociologically outmoded woman of leisure is nonetheless imperative for the sake of fashion. Fashion is based on envy and the urge of imitating the envied. It presupposes the existence of an aristocratic minority—aristocratic in the sartorial sense—that sets the "style" and the pace of style rotation. Newspapers keep the reader informed of the momentary wardrobe of such pacemakers. It is among the first duties of periodicals for the promotion of fashion to stifle the public interest for these women of whom, generally speaking, nothing is known but their ever changing dresses and husbands. Newspapermen reveal indiscreetly the amount of their purchase in fashionable establishments to create awe in the reader, all of which evidences the nation-wide interest for the taste and waste in the name of fashion. The dress habits of the common people echo the snobbery of the privileged class. One is tempted to think that the lower the occupational and educational level, the sterner is the obedience to the code of clothing. The little man is often the strongest supporter of the concept of fashion and censures severely



every dissenter. His zeal goes astonishingly far and does not stop before the idol of the public. This discloses the vast difference between the nature of popular and fashionable idols. For instance, the popularity of a military leader like General MacArthur does not include his dress habits.\* His remarkable disregard for established decorum as exemplified in his open-neck shirt (a comfort which he has not yet renounced on the most formal occasions and which should only cause regrets not to have been made customary for the rest of the army) aroused the irritation of his countrymen. In matter of apparel it is the wealthy and idle alone who set the standard.

Display of actual or feigned pecuniary rank, though not excusable, is understandable in a society where contacts of people are mostly short-lived. In a rural community the individual is constantly put to the test of civic excellence and is given ample opportunity to affirm his merits and demerits. Self-assertion through unreasonable or unwarranted expenditure fails to compensate for the lack of human qualities. Performing his daily tasks, the city-dweller is thrown into contact with strangers who escape his scrutiny. Judgment is passed quickly on the outer appearance, nine tenths of which represent his clothing apparel. All that remains of his proper identity, exposed to the inquisitive eye, are his face and hands. Even the face is becoming more and more of a mask; eye-glasses and paint often obscure what is left of facial features.

Psychologists assert that first impressions are made by virtue of dress. "With Americans," says E. B. Hurlock, "dress shows their success in attaining their national ideal, money, just as the scars of the primitive warrior showed his success in living up to the ideal of his tribe."<sup>164</sup> Judgment of personality is based upon inspection of the extra-personal quality of our sartorial disguise long before we set out to analyze behaviour and character from the more direct symptoms of speech. The individual of pronounced intellect is largely impervious to such deception made possible with the aid of purchasable trimmings, but the uneducated loves it and thrives on it. That is why fashion, which by nature intensifies competition through clothes, is of unfailing appeal to the dim-wit.

Fashion magazines, writes Elizabeth Hawes, "will take advantage of every bit of snobbery extant in the United States to drive home their points and sell the clothes of their advertisers. There is nothing new about snobbery, but in a world of mass-produced clothes it reaches unprecedented heights. In the

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\* *The unreserved willingness to endure the discomfort of our clothing is shown in this letter of a newspaper reader: "In an editorial you make much of the fact that General MacArthur has permitted himself to be photographed without a necktie. You suggest that his fellow Americans, in civilian life, should go and do likewise. . . . It is certainly much more comfortable to sit with, say, nothing on . . . than it is to have to put on an uncomfortable pair of trousers . . . But, remember this: everything we do without means that thousands, may be millions, will have to be without a job . . ."*<sup>165</sup>



**Macy's**  
Kennel Shop



What a witch...  
since she got her Macy mink!

Our Kennel Shop's assembled ensembles designed to make dogs think they're wolves!  
Witness the stag line above! Witness smartly braided Boxer coats. Pastel coats for  
Cocker Spaniels. Scottish plaids for Scotties. Tyrolean coats for Dachshunds, trimmed  
in Alpine green or red. Macy briefs for miniatures. What's more, every coat has its  
matchmates—collar, harness, lead, in colorful tune. And even that's not all.  
The Custom Made-to-Measure Service will whip up a coat of any fur  
from mouton to mink. The prices for putting on all this dog?  
Doggone Macy-low, of course! (Woof!) Kennel Shop, Macy's Fifth Floor.  
Coats from 2.98 to 4.98      Collar's from 84¢ to 1.00      Harness from 2.34 to 2.98  
Leads from 1.84 to 3.49      \*Subject to 20% Federal Excise Tax.      Fur coats from 12.10\* to \$216\*



**★MACY'S PRICE POLICY:** We endeavor to have the prices of our merchandise reflect a six per cent saving for cash, except on price-fixed merchandise.  
Macy's open Thursday (11 to 6) daily 9:15 to 6. Macy's Parkchester open late Thursday and Saturday

Other Macy News on Page 12

Newspaper advertisement, 1945, for dog's coats from \$2.98 to \$246. Courtesy Macy's.



U.S.A., where the aristocracy is one of money and not of culture, the results are often anything but artistically attractive."<sup>166</sup>

Continental clothing has ever been a source of anxiety to the alert businessman. French fashion industry, though it has influenced the American dress industry and probably will continue to do so, is something utterly different. There are almost no ready-made dresses in France; practically every single garment is made by craftsmen to an individual order. America produces only ready-made clothes; the made-to-order clothes amount to only a tenth of one per cent.<sup>167</sup> In the French way of producing, waste of merchandise is absent. America, by manufacturing garments the consumption of which cannot be possibly foretold, must take recourse to that annihilating sales talk which has crept into every breath of its life.

This sales talk, dedicated to one of the highest principles—the consumption of manufactured goods—sputters noisily from word by mouth and loud-speaker, and finds never-ending expression in newspapers and picture magazines. *Fashion is democratic*, sounds the contumacious repetition in the fashion writer's infantile or anile report. Fashion is democratic, echoes the dress-industrialist. Dresses-for-every-purse, the stock phrase of the trade, is taken as incontestable proof for the democratic nature of domestic apparel. It is not quite clear by what trick of perverted reasoning this slogan could ever have had a chance to stand up against logic. By the very same token, America's cities should be extolled as a triumph of democratic urbanism: the shelter they offer ranges from the most luxurious premises to the filthiest slums,—a roof for every purse indeed.

"To find the earliest indications of new fashions and fashion trends," expounds Nystrom, "one must find groups of people who have wealth, at least enough to make possible for them to buy freely beyond the boundaries of absolute necessities, leisure in which to plan for and make use of fashion goods, freedom from dominating restraint of custom and habit, courage to try new things, intelligence, shrewd appreciation of the social significance of the events and affairs of the world, good taste with a real basis in artistic sense and, last but not least, a keen desire to compete with other people for preeminence in style and fashion."<sup>168</sup> Evidently, this makes a perfect and good definition of aristocracy. How does our author reconcile wealth, leisure and competition in style and fashion with every purse?

"The democratic ideal of equality or at least of equality of opportunity taught in the schools, by the press, and from the pulpit and platform, assumes practical significance in fashion fields in that each individual under this philosophy strives to prove his equality with others and cannot help but select for his field of effort those in which fashion predominates."<sup>169</sup>

What are the chances to prove his or her equality with the wealthy and leisurely by abiding to fashion? The answer is—imitation. "Imitation," explains the same writer, "is the most essential element in fashion. If there were not imitation there could be no fashion. Thus, while copying and so-called style



piracy are admittedly an evil to the individual manufacturing concern whose successful designs are stolen and reproduced in cheaper and cheaper models, it is copying that makes fashion possible."<sup>170</sup> We cannot ask for a more frank and devastating elucidation: Fashion-democracy is the aping of clothes-aristocracy.

At this time when it becomes necessary to restore the meaning of the word democracy in connection with clothes, it must be pointed out that fashion fits the totalitarian state perfectly. If it were otherwise, the prolonged efforts of the Italian Fascist government to build up an imposing fashion industry in modern Turin could only be interpreted as an arduous fight for democracy. Fashion can only exist in countries where there are social classes, well separated and whose differences are well marked. True democracy excludes fashion.

In arguments on the essential functions of clothing (and its idiotic contortions) there are invariably those who wind up by insisting that the problems of clothing deserve no airing unless practical solutions are presented and novel merchandise is offered. Such contention is typical of the easy submissiveness which substitutes for independent thinking. It expresses the type of helpless and uncritical attitude which is continually kept in proper shape by commercial propaganda. The advertising man rules supreme, for his verbal and pictorial assertions conceal all defects and avoid all problems.

But his believers, thus deceived and coarsened, should be made to understand that "improvement" and "progress" are mostly fictitious and fallacious; that zippers and synthetics, streamlining and color scheming do not offer solutions to the very real and pressing demands which present-day living makes on clothing. They should also understand that, since we live in a society which is notoriously squeamish in its protestations, it is difficult to discuss either motivations or requirements of dress without risking the accusation of having a piggish mind. If, in view of that indictment, comfort is needed, it can be found in the thought that identical accusations would have been leveled against a person who, fifty years ago, had been able to describe the contents of today's fashion magazines.

Are clothes really important enough to warrant the painful experience of probing into new lines of thought? Since most people love their clothes and since, on the other hand, clothes seemingly matter so little, is it really worth the trouble to make a new start? If these questions are raised in a mood of indifference, they bespeak an attitude intolerable for its moronic character. But if they are raised because clothing seems to be the least of our worries, it should be pointed out that most people want cheaper and more beautiful clothes; they also want more clothes. Hence, we have to ask ourselves:

Are cheaper clothes desirable if they are uncomfortable and hideous? Do we want beautiful clothes as long as fashion writers are the sole judges to decide what is beautiful? And do we want more clothes if they require all the closet space and careful attention they do today? Furthermore, what is the sense of



machines that will cut thousands of layers of cloth unless we find out whether we will not be better off without pattern cutting? And what is the good of expensive tools for making shoes if no shoe-manufacturer knows or cares what is good and what is bad for the foot?

We ourselves may within our lifetime become witnesses of Western civilization's fight for survival. If we are correct in assuming that, to some degree, our coverings are the outward reflection of our philosophy of life, they augur badly. The future historian who, contemplating the remnants of our civilization, infers from our costume a shocking degree of dishonesty and foolishness, will only have made the conclusions which are among a historian's business and privilege.



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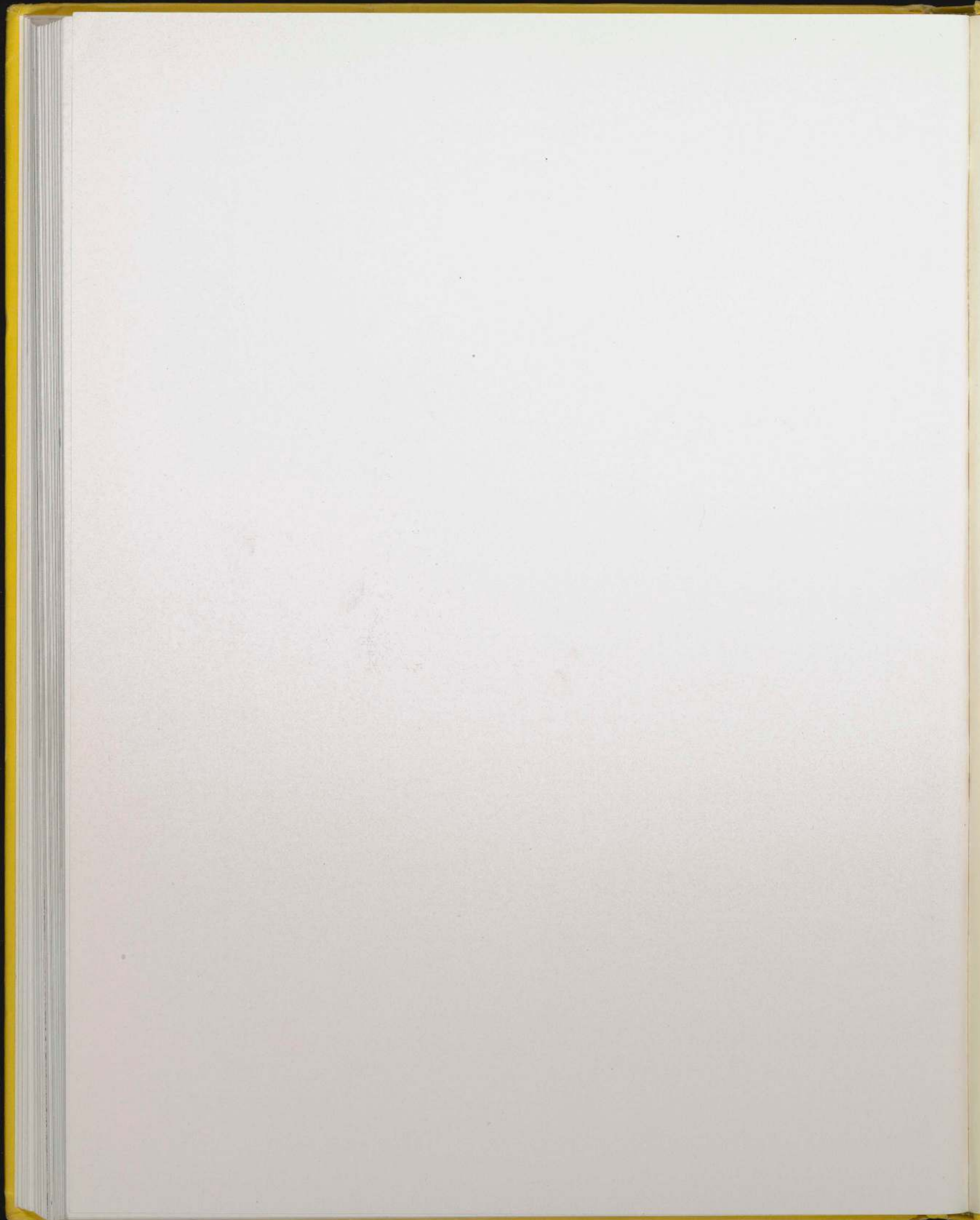


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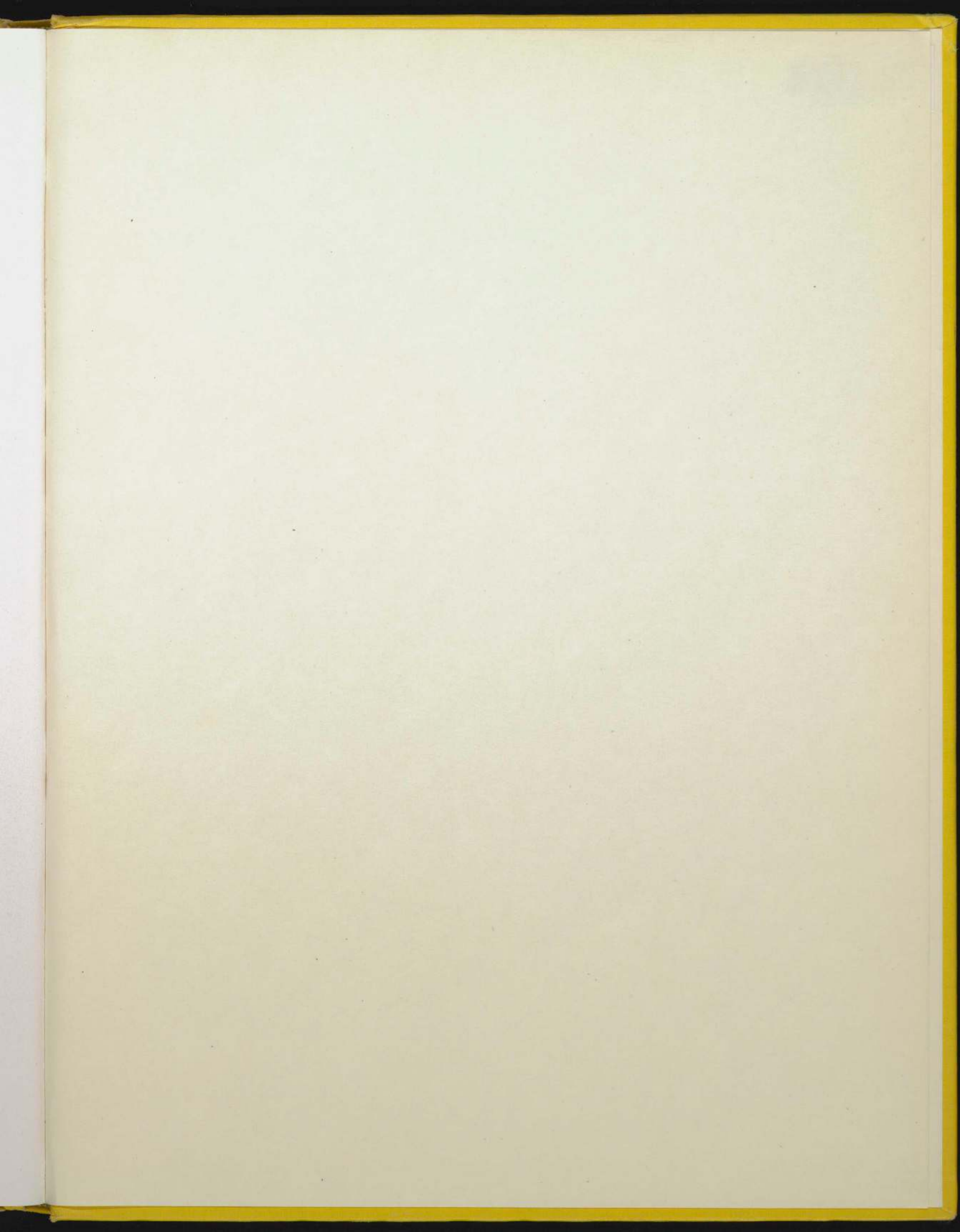




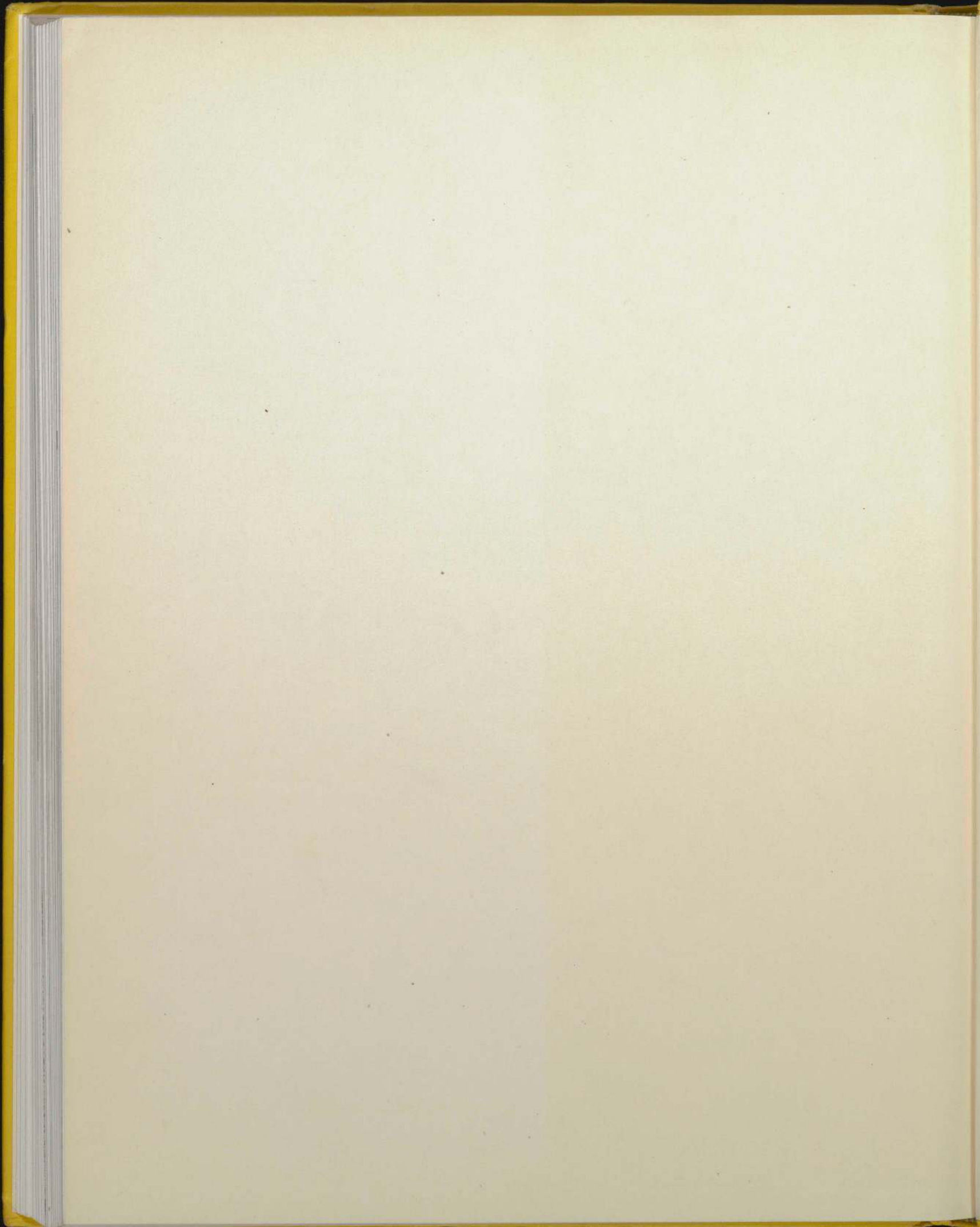














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