

UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM BULLETIN 250

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM

THE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY

PAPER 60, PAGES 65-92

ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY
OF THE FASHION PLATE

John L. Nevinson

SMITHSONIAN PRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

1967

MAXIMILIANO CAESARE AD SIGISMVN-
DVM POLONIAE REGEM ET BASILIVM MA-
GNVM MOSCOVIAE PRINCIPEM SIC
VESTITVS DESTINATVS SVM.



Figure 1.—DRESS OF SIGMUND VON HERBERSTEIN for the Polish Embassy in 1517. Over his doublet and breeches he wears a brocade gown lined with silk. From *Gratae Posteritati*, 1560. (Courtesy of British Museum, London.)

Origin and Early History Of the Fashion Plate

A fashion plate is a costume portrait indicating a suitable style of clothing that can be made or secured. Fashion illustration began in the late 15th and early 16th centuries with portrait pictures that made a person's identity known not by his individual features but rather by his dress.

This paper, based on a lecture given in the fall of 1963 at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, traces the history of the fashion plate from its origins to its full development in the 19th century. With the improvements in transportation and communication, increased attention came to be paid to foreign fashions, accessories, and even to hairstyles. As the reading public grew, so fashion consciousness increased, and magazines, wholly or partly devoted to fashions, flourished and were widely read in the middle social classes: this growth of fashion periodicals also is briefly described here.

THE AUTHOR: John L. Nevinson, retired, was formerly with The Victoria and Albert Museum, London. He now devotes himself to full-time research on costumes and their history.

FASHION MAY BE DEFINED as a general style of dress appropriate for a particular person to wear at a certain time of day, on a special occasion, or for a specific purpose.

A fashion plate is a costume portrait, that is to say, a portrait not of an individual but one which shows the sort of clothes that are being worn or that are likely to be worn. It is a generalized portrait, indicating the style of clothes that a tailor, dressmaker, or store can make or supply, or showing how different materials

can be made up into clothes. A fashion plate is related to the wear of its epoch and not to the history of dress, except insofar as the dress of a historical personage may be imitated at a later date. A fashion plate is reproduced mechanically, the woodcuts and engravings of earlier dates being succeeded by lithographs and finally by the various photographic processes of our time.

This definition of a fashion plate is broader than the one adopted by Mr. Vyvyan Holland, who has

written the only substantial book on the subject.¹ Mr. Holland limited his study to hand-colored fashion plates of the period from 1770 to 1899, possibly because these are most in favor with collectors. He omitted trade and advertisement plates, believing them to be primarily concerned with the history of dress.

The main functions of fashionable dress are to draw attention to the wearer, to define his social position, and to show who he is and what he is doing. Modesty, protection against the weather, and appeal to the opposite sex, are, so far as fashion is concerned, subsidiary functions. Interest in fashionable dress goes back at least to the 16th century, as is evidenced by a popular dialogue written by Alessandro Piccolomini, a relative of Pope Pius II, who subsequently became coadjutor Archbishop of Siena.² Piccolomini wrote under the pseudonym "Lo Stordito," and it is not clear to what extent the dialogue was sponsored by the Academy of the *Intronati*, an aristocratic, literary, and social society of which he was a member. He stated that the requirements of fashionable dress were that it be sumptuous in material, tasteful in style, and borne gracefully by the wearer. Unfortunately for the costume historian, the dialogue is not illustrated.

It has been assumed too readily perhaps that the fashion plate dates from the late 18th century, but it is not difficult to demonstrate that it existed in all its essentials at earlier periods, even though its history may not be continuous. The beginning of the illustration of fashions is found in portraits, the earliest of which, either sculptured or painted, developed from images of kings and important personages.³ These images, unlike the *imagines* of the Romans, made no attempt to portray the features of an individual, but made his identity known rather by his clothes, his arms, and other indications of rank or position. The development of the stylized image into the personal portrait is well illustrated in the diary of Jörg von Ehingen.⁴ Von Ehingen, who traveled widely in Europe during the years preceding 1460, might be described as a professional jouster, who took part,



Figure 2.—DRESS OF SIGMUND VON HERBERSTEIN for the second embassy to Moscow, 1526. He wears a wide-sleeved gown with the collar and lining made of fine sables. His fur-lined high cap is of white felt, its brim distinguished by a band of red cloth, a mark of nobility. From *Gratae Posteritati*, 1560. (Courtesy of British Museum, London.)

usually with great success, in tournaments at the various courts. To illustrate the account of his exploits, he had portraits drawn and painted of the different princes and kings, portraying each not with his crown and scepter but with the distinctive fashion of his court. This diary—not printed until the 19th century—was circulated in manuscript and shows, in addition to the interest in personal portraits, the growing interest in the dress of individuals.

Although the earlier painters of the Italian Renaissance recorded the decorative and often exotic dress

¹ VYVYAN HOLLAND, *Hand Coloured Fashion Plates, 1770-1899* (Boston: Boston Book and Art Shop, Inc., 1955).

² ALESSANDRO PICCOLOMINI, *Dialogo de la bella creanza de le donne* (Venice, 1540). The dialogue is reprinted in G. ZONTA, *Trattati del Cinquecento sulla donna* (1913), but it deserves a modern translation and editing.

³ SIR HENRY HAKE, "The English Historic Portrait." Lecture for the British Academy, 1943.

⁴ MALCOLM LETTS, *The Diary of Jörg von Ehingen* (1929).



Figure 3.—DRESS OF SIGMUND VON HERBERSTEIN for an embassy to the Sultan, 1541. The short gown (*Schaube*) of Italian brocade figured with black and gold has wide shoulders and padded upper sleeves. The collar, lining, and foresleeves are of similar fabric but with a dark violet ground for contrast. From *Gratae Posteritati*, 1560. (Courtesy of British Museum, London.)

of their times, their portraits of individuals consisted in the main of medallie heads and busts. It was the German portrait painters who, to a greater extent, recorded and disseminated the knowledge of fashions. Hans Burgkmair painted himself on the occasions of his betrothal in 1497 and his marriage in 1498,⁵ and in the 16th century Hans Holbein the younger noted

⁵ SIGRID F. CHRISTENSEN, *Die männliche Kleidung in der süd-deutschen Renaissance* (1934), pl. 21.

on his drawings the dress material and colors of the clothes worn by his sitters.⁶ Even a much less distinguished person, Matthäus Schwartz, a clerk employed by the banking firm of the Fuggers at Augsburg, had a book prepared showing the clothes he wore at what he considered to be the most important stages of his career.⁷

The first person to have such pictures printed was Sigmund von Herberstein, who deserves detailed consideration.⁸ In his diplomatic career, which extended over 30 years, Sigmund von Herberstein served three Emperors—Maximilian I, Charles V, and Ferdinand I. He was a student of Russian history and an outstanding linguist, who, having learned Wendish as a boy, found no difficulty with the Polish and Russian languages. When, in his old age, he printed his memoirs, he doubtlessly aimed at giving information on how an ambassador should conduct himself and to this end included illustrations of what he actually had worn, which in many copies of the memoirs are carefully colored by hand.⁹ Concerning his journey in 1517 (fig. 1), he states that "In these robes I was sent on the embassy to Sigismund King of Poland," no doubt the fashion for the formal dress of an envoy. On his first embassy to the Grand Duke of Moscow in 1517 he was presented with a Russian fur-lined robe, but on his second embassy in 1526, he received a greater distinction (fig. 2): "Having been sent a second time by the Emperor Ferdinand then Archduke to Moscow, the Grand Duke bestowed upon me these robes." This dress was far more sumptuous than the formal black velvet gown which he normally wore for embassies to the Spanish and other courts.

By 1541 there was a change in fashion (fig. 3). Von Herberstein wrote: "We two orators were sent in this dress to the Turkish Emperor," and it was in this dress that von Herberstein, suffering perhaps from arthritis, complained of having great difficulty

⁶ SIR KARL T. PARKER, *The drawings of H. Holbein at Windsor Castle* (1945), pls. 16, 19, 24.

⁷ This book, *Kleidungsbüchlein*, in the Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum, Brunswick, Germany, was edited by August Fink and published in full in 1963 by the Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, Berlin.

⁸ For a general account, see J. I. NEVINSON, "Sigmund von Herberstein: Notes on 16th century dress," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für historische Waffen- und Kostum-Kunde* (1959), new ser. 1, p. 86.

⁹ SIGMUND VON HERBERSTEIN, *Gratae Posteritati* . . . (Vienna, 1560).



Figure 4.—SIGMUND VON HERBERSTEIN IN ROBES presented to ambassadors by the Sultan, 1541. The Turkish gown of yellow silk figured with black, with some of the medallions outlined in blue, has long sleeves that hide the hands. The inner robe is of red silk figured with yellow and gathered with a blue sash. From *Gratae Posteritati*, 1560. (Courtesy of British Museum, London.)

in bowing low enough to kiss the hand of the seated Sultan. The imperial fashion of breeches and hose might have seemed indelicate to Suleiman "the Magnificent," who gave the ambassadors other robes (fig. 4): "The Emperor of the Turks presented us also with these robes." The long-gowned costume shown here should have been completed by a turban, but von Herberstein evidently would not allow himself to be depicted in this.

Von Herberstein seems to have kept his robes in his palace in Vienna, along with his collection of Russian and oriental weapons, illustrated in his history of Russia:¹⁰ these, and stuffed specimens of Aurochs, then almost extinct, and European bison, formed the first museum of costume and natural history on record.

With the development of ceremonial, some of the princely courts of Germany had illustrations prepared of what should be worn by the officials of different grades (fig. 5). Several copies of each of these *Hofkleiderbücher*—books giving rules or standards for correct court dress—were no doubt issued, but none seems to have been printed for the general information of the public. The first printed book on tailoring, by Juan de Alcega, was published in 1588 and includes diagrams showing how to cut ceremonial robes from the roll of cloth,¹¹ but there are no illustrations of what the completed garments should look like.

The history of fashion plates, therefore, is to be followed in less specialized works. In the 16th century, with the improvement of communications and the continuation of voyages of discovery, great interest developed in the costume and way of life of other nations. It is in this connection that the word "fashion" was first used in its modern sense. In an address to King Henry VIII, a petitioner in 1529, deploring the sinfulness of the people of England, wrote:¹²

The pryncypall cause [of sin] is their costly apparell and specially their manyfolde and divers changes of fashyons which the men and specially the women must weare upon both hedde and bodye: sometyme cappe, sometyme hoode, now the French fasshyon now the Spanyshe fasshyon and then the Italyan fasshyon and the Myllen [Milan] fasshyon, so that there is noo ende of consuminge of substance

Foreign fashions were being imitated by English ladies. Inventories¹³ in the Public Record Office in London show that the English queens had robes cut in

¹⁰ SIGMUND VON HERBERSTEIN, *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii*, expanded ed. (Basel: Oporinus, 1556).

¹¹ JUAN DE ALCEGA, *Libro di geometria y traca* (1589). See also, *Tailor and cutter* (London, 1933), no. 68. A copy of the 1588 edition was acquired by the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., in 1964.

¹² "Supplication to the King." Printed by the Early English Text Society, extra ser. (1871), p. 52.

¹³ *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, vol. 1 (2), on. 3326.



Figure 5.—LEAF FROM A BOOK of court costumes showing back and front view of a gentleman's dress. German, second half of the 16th century. (Courtesy of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

Spanish, Milanese, or French styles. As for men, it was said that they could not make up their minds what to wear, and a popular caricature shows an Englishman standing naked with a roll of cloth under his arm and a pair of tailor's shears in his hand, saying:¹⁴

I am an English man, and naked I stand here,
Musyng in my mynde what raiment I shal were,
For now I wyll were thys, and now I wyll were that;
Now I wyll were I cannot tel what.

London, however, was not a fashion center, and the first book on the fashions of nations was printed in

Paris in 1562.¹⁵ In his introduction to the book François Deserpz moralized:¹⁶

. . . noz vieux predecesseurs . . . ont esté plus curieux de sumptueuse vesture que de rare vertu . . . car tout ainsi qu'on cognoist le Moyne au froc, le Fol au chaperon, & le Soldat aux armes, ainsi se cognoist l'homme sage à l'habit non excessif.

Acknowledgments were made to the late Captain Roberval and to an unnamed Portuguese, but it is not known which of them contributed the portrait of the

¹⁵ *Recueil de la diversité des habits . . .* (1562). The book was reissued in 1564 and 1567.

¹⁶ Translated, this reads: ". . . our predecessors of old . . . were more careful about sumptuous dress than rare virtue . . . for as the monk was recognized by his frock, the jester by his cap, and the soldier by his arms, so the wise man was known by his moderate habit."

¹⁴ ANDREW BOORDE, *Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* (1542). Reprinted by the Early English Text Society, extra ser., vol. 10 (1870), p. 116.



Figure 6.—PORTRAIT of an English lady. From *Recueil de la diversité des habits*, 1567 ed. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)

English lady (fig. 6). Although she is said to be distinguishable by her square bonnet, it is hard to find the style paralleled in any other picture. The huge slashes on the bodice of her gown surely are exaggerated, as is the smallness of the muff which hangs by a cord from her waist. On the other hand, Joris Hoefnagel copied and used the portrait as one of a group of citizens standing in the foreground of Hogenberg's 1574 plan of London,¹⁷ so the figure must

¹⁷ A. M. HIND, *Engraving in England in the 16th and 17th centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), vol. 1, pl. 34.



Figure 7.—DRESS OF A FRENCH WOMAN (front view) with a tight-sleeved bodice through the cuts of which the lining is drawn out in puffs. From *Omnium gentium habitus . . .*, 1563 ed. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)

have been regarded as approximately accurate.

Much more convincing as evidence of fashions are the etchings by Aeneas Vico that appear in Bertelli's book on the costumes of the peoples, published in Venice in 1563.¹⁸ The French woman shown in figure 7 clearly illustrates a fashion which is familiar enough in portraits. Of particular interest is the back view (fig. 8) showing her petticoat. This type of petticoat was popular in Spain in the late 15th

¹⁸ F. BERTELLI, *Omnium fere gentium nostrae aetatis habitus . . .* (Venice, 1563).



Figure 8.—DRESS OF A FRENCH WOMAN (back view) showing the manner in which the bodice was laced and the hood fell at the back. The skirt is raised, revealing the farthingale petticoat with the roll at its hem which contained cane stiffening (*verdugo*). From *Omnium gentium habitus* . . . , 1563 ed. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)



Figure 9.—DRESS OF A NOBLEWOMAN of Mantua. From Vecellio, *De gli habiti antichi e moderni*, 1590. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)

century,¹⁹ but was not adopted in France, Italy, and England until the second half of the 16th century.

The next development in the history of the fashion plate is found in the costume books by Cesare Vecellio, published in Venice in 1590 and 1598.²⁰ Vecellio, a

¹⁹ For the origin of this Spanish fashion. in 1470, see CARMEN BERNIS MADRAZO, *Indumentaria medieval espanola* (1956), p. 50, pl. 158.

²⁰ There are two editions of the book by CESARE VECELLIO: *De gli habiti antichi e moderni* . . . (Venice: Zenaro, 1590 [Italian text]); *Habiti Antichi e Moderni* (Venice: Sessa, 1598 [Italian and Latin text]). The quality of the woodblocks and impressions varies considerably.

member of the same family as Titian, showed the costume of the different ranks of society in the various Italian cities and states, in the other countries of Europe, and indeed in the known world; he also depicted a number of antique and old-fashioned dresses. Unfortunately, the illustrations (fig. 9) by Christoph Krieger, whose name was Italianized as Guerra, are not as good as Vico's, and Krieger died before the series was complete. But Vecellio took great pains to secure accurate and up-to-date information about fashions, and he received letters and drawings from his friends in various cities of Italy. Master Erasmo Falte of Parma sent him particulars of the

dress of the Duchess of Parma, together with a sketch by a good local painter, which Vecellio describes and adds:²¹

Sotto costumano il verducato, ovvero faldiglia, qual tien con arte la sottana larga à modo di campana, che torna molto commodo al camminare, ò danzare: & hora si costumano per tutta l'Italia questa sopra detta faldiglia.

Thus, the bell-shaped farthingale (fig. 8) had by 1590 become the general wear of the upper classes in Italy, as it was already in Spain, France, and England.

Of even greater interest is the evidence of Vecellio's relations with a fashion house in Venice. In his general account of the housedresses of the noble ladies of his time, he mentions the rich modern materials and especially silk brocades of four and even of six colors, admirably woven:²²

Di queste opere sì belle è stato in Venetia autore M. Bartholomeo Bontempele dal Calice, il quale alle volte con le mostre, ch'egli fa di questi drappi de' quali lui è stato inventore, mostra la grandezza dell'ingegno suo, la quale è accompagnata da una incomparabile liberalità, e bontà, per il che è molto amato dalla nobiltà Venetiana, & da molti Principi d'Italia & in specie dal Serenissimo Duca di Mantova. Nella sua buttiga dove molti Signori e Principi mandano a fornirsi, & fino al serraglio del Gran Turco, si veggono broccati à opera di tutte le sorte d'oro e di argento.

It may seem strange that within 20 years of the Battle of Lepanto (1571) Venetian fabrics were exported from Bontempele's sign of "The Chalice" to Constantinople to compete with the noted velvets of Brusa. After describing the clothes of the best dressed merchants, Vecellio does not hesitate to mention his

²¹ Translated, this reads: "Underneath, the habit of the ladies [who imitate the Duchess] is to wear the farthingale or pleated frock, which skillfully holds the petticoat out wide like a bell. This fashion is extremely convenient for walking or dancing, and nowadays, ladies throughout all Italy wear this pleated frock mentioned above." (1590 ed., folio 187.a.)

²² Translated, this reads: "The originator of these beautiful fabrics in Venice is Master Bartholomew Bontempele at the sign of the 'Chalice.' From time to time at exhibitions he makes of these materials he has created, he shows the greatness of his intellect, which is accompanied by an incomparable generosity and kindness for which he is greatly loved by the Venetian nobility, by many princes of Italy, and in particular by his Serene Highness the Duke of Mantua. In his store, to which many gentlemen and princes send orders, even the Seraglio of the Grand Turk, are to be seen brocades worked in all manners of gold and silver." (1590 ed., folio 139.)

friends Master Paolo, spice merchant and vendor of the celebrated *Theriakon* (known in England as Venice treacle), of the sign of "The Ostrich," and Bernadino Pillotto, seller of pictures and other ornaments.

At this time there were also woodcuts illustrating hairstyles. The exact date of Christoph Krieger's *Varie Acconciature di Teste* (fig. 10) is not known. While Vecellio had remarked that the Venetian ladies were imitating the goddess Diana and surmounting their tresses with two little curls like horns, Krieger made illustrations that were even more fanciful. Each lady bears the name of a city and a distinguishing quality or temperament, but there is no more reason to connect the styles with local fashions than to believe



Figure 10.—FASHION PLATE depicting fanciful hair style of a lady from Ferrara, by Christoph Krieger. From *Varie acconciature di teste*, ca. 1590. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)



Que ce n'est une chose étrange
 De remarquer combien me change
 Cet habillement reformé:
 Que j'ay de mal à m'en assouir,
 Et qu'il me faict de le prendre,
 Pour ne l'avoir accoustumé:
 Je voisient ma nature,
 Me voyant en cette posture,
 Et demeure tout interdit,
 Mais dequoy ne serc cette honte,
 Si par ruyon, ou par vent, me
 Je suis venu à l'Édit
 Et est honte qu'on s'accommoder
 Au temps au lieu l'a meut,
 Surant de j'ai de deo et j'ai dix
 Que j'ai de de de de de de de
 De de de de de de de de de de de

Figure 11.—COURTIER FOLLOWING THE EDICT of 1633. He has laid aside his lace collar and fine clothes. By Abraham Bosse, 1633. (Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)



Figure 12.—LA GALERIE DU PALAIS. The fashionable crowd throngs the milliners' counters in the Palais Royal. By Abraham Bosse, 1636. (Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

that the ladies of Ferrara were bold or those of Todi capricious

Indeed, this series would not be considered in connection with fashion plates were it not for a conversation in Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, first acted in 1600 by the Children of the Queen's Chapel. Philautia addresses her friend Phantaste (Act 2, scene 1):

Philautia: . . . What, have you changed your head-tire?

Phantaste: Yes, faith, the other was near the common, it had no extraordinary grace; besides, I had worn it almost a day, in good troth.

Philautia: I'll be sworn, this is most excellent for the device, and rare; 'tis after the Italian print we looked on t'other night.

This certainly suggests that one of the little eyases, perhaps even Nathaniel Field or Salathiel Pavy, was wearing a fantastic wig designed after one of the Krieger woodcuts.

In the early 17th century there was nothing published in northern Europe that was closely related to the fashion trade. There are engravings of costume figures such as the *Sieben Edelleute verschiedener Nation* by Willem Buytewech (Amsterdam, ca. 1614), which are charmingly drawn but, as to costume, idealized and exaggerated.²³ The same criticism applies to the

²³ There is an excellent reprint of Buytewech's book with an introduction by W. BRUHN (1926).

later series by J. de St. Igny, especially in *Le Jardin de la Noblesse*, and to Jacques Callot's *La Noblesse*,²⁴ which depict military and court dress with less caricature than most of this master's work. Among the engravings of Abraham Bosse, there is a series (fig. 11) relating to the sumptuary law of 1633 by which Louis XIII, at the instigation of Cardinal Richelieu, tried to curb the extravagance and simplify the dress of the ladies and gentlemen of his court. This series is worth mentioning as a record of the dress at this period, but neither these engravings nor the better known "Galerie du Palais" (fig. 12) are, strictly speaking, fashion plates which provide information for dressmakers or wearers of clothes.²⁵

In England, the engravings were of a rather different style. Dutch prints of allegorical subjects were in vogue, and there are innumerable sets of prints of the seven Ages of mankind, the five senses, the four seasons, the continents, and the liberal arts, typified by real and imaginary figures in all styles of dress. Jean Barrà's figure "Seeing" (fig. 13), with her looking glass and perspective glass, accompanied by the farsighted eagle, is illustrated here mainly because of its explanatory quatrain mentioning fashions.²⁶

Not until the early 1640s can reliable engravings of English fashions be found. Most of Wenceslas Hollar's 1639 series, "Ornatus Muliebris Anglicanus, or, the severall habits of English women from the Nobilitie to the Country woman, as they are in these times," is slightly suspect as being imaginary or at best idealized, though the lady in waiting (Hollar's no. 23) and the country woman (Hollar's no. 26) walking on her iron-ring pattens may be portraits. Hollar's "Theatrum Mulierum or Aula Veneris" of 1644 has a much stronger claim to represent the fashions of London, although some of the European women may be in the traditional clothes of their cities and states. The full-length female figures of the seasons are really costume portraits set against London backgrounds²⁷ (fig. 14), and, although charm-



Not soe quick' hanted is the ENGLE' for her pray
As if new fashions were to make me gay.

Figure 13.—SEEING, from a set of the *Five Senses*. Engraving by Jean Barrà, ca. 1625. (Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London.)

ing in themselves, they are not true fashion plates, while those of the series of women's heads in circles, which are not copied from other work, are simply portraits²⁸ of ladies whom Hollar actually knew in London. Notwithstanding his engravings of muffs,²⁹ it is most unlikely that Hollar had any connection with either a fashion house or a milliner's shop in London.

During the Commonwealth period (1648–60) Hollar's work depicting costumes faded out, but the diarist John Evelyn was writing a little book, *Tyrannus, or the Mode*, which was published in 1661.³⁰ In it he

²⁴ C. LE BLANC, *Manuel de l'amateur des estampes* (1854) no 549–560.

²⁵ For examples, see A. BLUM, *L'oeuvre gravé de Abraham Bosse* (1924), nos. 957–961; the plate "Pompe funèbre de la Mode," by A. BLUM (in *Les Modes au XVII^{me} siècle*, 1927), p. 21; and F. P. WILSON, "Funeral obsequies of Sir All-in-new-fashions" (in *Shakespeare Survey*, 1958), p. 98.

²⁶ J. L. NEVINSON, "Fashion Plates and Fashion, 1625–35," *Apollo* (1950) vol. 51, pp. 138–140.

²⁷ GUSTAVE PARTHEY, *Kurzes Verzeichniss der Hollarschen Kupferstichen* (1853), nos. 606–609.

²⁸ GUSTAVE PARTHEY, *Kurzes Verzeichniss der Hollarschen Kupferstichen* (1853), nos. 1908–12, 1930–33.

²⁹ PARTHEY, *ibid.*, nos. 1946–51.

³⁰ JOHN EVELYN, *Tyrannus or the Mode* (1661). Facsimile reprint with introduction by J. L. NEVINSON (Oxford: Luttrell Society, 1951), no. 11.



Winter

Figure 14.—WINTER. The lady wears a hood and mask, together with furs. She is walking in Cornhill, London. Engraving by Wencelas Hollar, 1643 (Parthey no. 609). (Courtesy of British Museum, London.)

mentions a French woman in London during the troubles, whose customers tormented her with inquiries about French fashions to such an extent that she used to devise "new Fancies out of her own Head, which were never worn in France." Most likely she did not distribute fashion plates but displayed actual garments or miniature models, perhaps mounted as dolls ("babies"), as examples of new fashions.

In the *Tyrannus*, Evelyn not only touched on the history and psychology of fashion but also went as far as to recommend a reformed dress for men, including the Persian vest and sash which was to be reflected to

a certain extent in the fashions of the mid-1660s. Since he did not illustrate his theory, there has always been some dispute as to what the Persian dress actually was,³¹ but in any case the fashion did not last. On the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Charles II, returning to England from Holland, retained Dutch fashions for a while (fig. 15). But, by 1670, English men's dress approximated the French in style, although not in sumptuousness.

In the second half of the 17th century the attention of Europe was focused on the court of Louis XIV and the French style of dress, especially for men, predominated. In particular, the coat (*justaucorps*), which evolved from the cassock, an outer garment, began to be worn regularly over the doublet, which by this time was already much reduced in size yet destined to survive as the waistcoat (*veste*). This fashion spread fairly rapidly through Europe—in England, as has been mentioned, it was dominant by 1670—but it is not clear how. The position of France, however, was stated in a fashion article in the *Mercurie Galant* in 1673 (vol. 3):³²

... rien ne plaît davantage que les Modes nées en France C'est pourquoi dans toutes les Provinces du Monde on fait venir de France quantité de choses qui regardent l'habillement encor qu'on ne s'habille pas tout-à-fait à la Française

The *Mercurie Galant*, strangely neglected by costume historians, occupies a most important place in the history of fashion literature, since it is the first and for almost a century the only periodical to contain regular articles on contemporary fashion. The person responsible for editing and indeed for writing these articles was Jean Donneau de Visé (1640–1710), an unsuccessful dramatist, rival of Molière, whom he sarcastically attacked several times in print. The story of his journalistic venture is not at all easy to unravel,³³

³¹ E. S. DE BEER, "King Charles II's own fashion," *Warburg Institute Journal* (1935), vol. 2, no. 2, p. 105.

³² Translated, this reads: ". . . nothing is more pleasing than the styles born in France This is why much relating to dress is imported from France into all the provinces of the world, though the final dress is not exactly French."

³³ EMILE MAGNE, *Images de Paris sous Louis XIV* (1939). In this book, the social historian Dr. Magne devotes the best part of a chapter to the *Mercurie Galant* and gives a listing of all fashion articles up to 1700.



FIGURE 15

Figure 15.—MAN in petticoat breeches (Rhinegraves). This illustration is not a fashion plate but an engraving that was often reprinted in pattern books used by teachers and students of figure drawing. From a drawing book by S. le Clerc, ca. 1665. (Author's collection.)



FIGURE 16

Figure 16.—COURTIER IN FULL DRESS for the winter 1677-78 wearing a flame-colored embroidered cloth cloak over a gray silk coat and matching waistcoat. This costume is almost as grand as the blue privilege "justaucorps à brevet" which, after 1665, was occasionally granted to others than princes of royal blood. Issued with the *Mercur Galant*, 1678. (Author's collection.)



FIGURE 17

Figure 17.—LADY FITTED OUT for the winter of 1677-78 wears a dress of black velvet with diamond knots and an ermine-bordered skirt. She carries a colored muff. Issued with the *Mercur Galant*, 1678. (Author's collection.)



Figure 18.—OUTDOOR WINTER DRESS for men is strongly influenced by military fashions. An enormous fringed baldrick, tied by a military scarf, supports the diminutive dress sword. Wigs and hats were comparatively small for the winter 1677–78. Issued with the *Mercuré Galant*, 1678. (Author's collection.)



Figure 19.—LADY IN INFORMAL winter attire walks to her coach wearing a flowered gold-brocaded gown which has been caught back to show her embroidered petticoat bordered with ermine. She wears a black coif so that her hair will not be disarranged. Issued with the *Mercuré Galant*, 1678. (Author's collection.)

since the octavo publications ("Chez Claude Barbin au Palais") were pirated almost immediately, and impressions—all that I have seen are duodecimos—appeared in Paris and Amsterdam ("Suivant la Copie imprimée à Paris"). A single number of an English translation, the *Mercury Gallant*, is in the British Museum.

The *Mercuré Galant* was published sporadically from 1672 through 1674, with six numbers in all. In 1677, it obtained a privilege and, with a dedication to the Dauphin, took a new lease on life under the title *Le nouveau Mercuré Galant*. Thereafter, it flourished for some years; the January–March number for 1677 was followed by monthly parts, and on May 15, 1678, the first supplementary (*Extraordinaire*) number was published, containing an article on fashions illustrated

with fashion plates.³⁴ The magazine was addressed to the ladies, and, in addition to a modicum of news and war reports, it contained gossip, poetry, riddles, songs with their music, and correspondence with readers, some no doubt fictitious. It deserves full credit for being the first modern-style magazine.

The fashions for the winter 1677–78 (figs. 16–19) may be followed in the pages of the *Mercuré Galant*, but, since these four fashion plates were also distributed separately, their connection with it has often been overlooked. The same is true of the large engraving of the interior of a milliner's shop (fig. 20), the items in which were numbered and described in the text of

³⁴ See J. L. NEVINSON, "The 'Mercury Gallant' or European Fashions in the 1670's," *Connoisseur* (1955) vol. 136, p. 87.

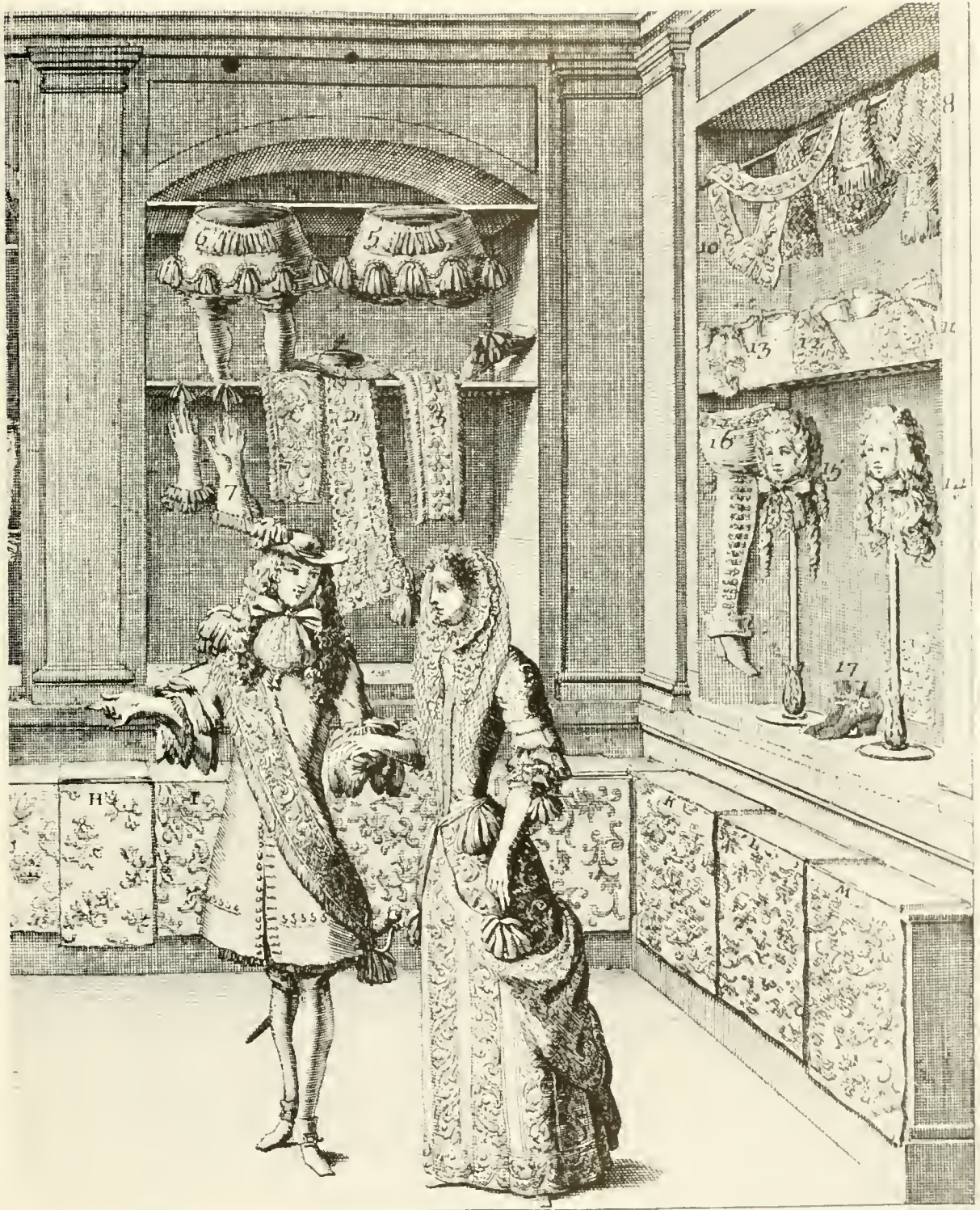


Figure 20.—INTERIOR OF A PARISIAN MILLINER'S SHOP. On display are accessories to men's fashionable costume—breeches, scarves, gloves, and wigs. Detail from an engraving by J. Lepautre after J. Bérain. Reengraved from a small print in the *Extraordinaire* issue of the *Mercure Galant*, March 1678. (Author's collection.)



Figure 21.—SUMMER DRESS of a gentleman. He wears a linen waistcoat garnished with lace, and a long wig (cf. fig. 18). From the *Extraordinaire* of the *Mercur Galant*, June 1678. (Author's collection.)



Figure 22.—SUMMER DRESS of a lady with a pleated lace (*Point d'Angleterre*) petticoat. From the *Extraordinaire* of the *Mercur Galant*, June 1678. (Author's collection.)

the *Mercur Galant*. Donneau de Visé depended on trade support and took the opportunity to mention names wherever he could. The new fabrics displayed below the shelves are distinguished by letters; the one on the right (letter M), for example, is an Italian yellow satin brocaded with white and violet. Other small figured fabrics, he wrote, might be obtained away from the Palais "chez le Sieur Baroy, au Cloître Saint Opportune," and ribbons might be found from Sieur le Gras in the Palais itself. The editor de Visé gives thanks to M. Bérain (1637–1711), designateur ordinaire du Cabinet du Roy, and to M. Lepautre (1618–82) for engraving the plates.

The summer fashions for 1678 were illustrated in the next *Extraordinaire* number published on July 20 and represented by a gentleman (fig. 21) and his lady (fig. 22). Details of these plates are poor, and, although they are taken from the Dutch edition, the

original designer and engraver must have been far less competent than either Bérain or Lepautre.

The winter fashions for 1678–79 were described in a long article in the ordinary October number of the *Mercur Galant*, which, for the costume historian, is of great importance, since it deals among other topics with the evasion of the sumptuary legislation by the fashionable world. The fashion plates are by a new artist and are reduced to two (figs. 23 and 24).

From this point the *Mercur Galant* ceased to publish a regular series of fashion plates. Occasional articles on fashion appeared through the rest of the 1680s and into the next decade, but they are shorter and less informative. Donneau de Visé's adventure into fashion journalism evidently had failed, probably because of a lack of demand for it. Fashions both in clothes and in fabrics did not change very rapidly, and general fashion information was supplied by two



Figure 23.—GENTLEMAN in winter attire supposedly just returned from the army. He ordered his gray cloth suit from Sieur Gaultier, whose shop, "A la Couronne," was located in the Rue des Bourdonnais. From the *Mercure Galant*, October 1678. (Author's collection.)



Figure 24.—LADY in winter dress of brown Florentine satin. Her petticoat is of off-white (*d'un blanc un peu sale*) satin brocaded with blue, violet, red, and brown designs. From the *Mercure Galant*, October 1678. (Author's collection.)

other sources: first, by the annual almanacs, which were often embellished by a large engraving of some important political event, and secondly, by the print shops in the Rue St. Jacques and elsewhere, which commissioned not only Lepautre, who had worked for the *Mercure Galant*, but the Bonnarts, Jean de St. Jean, Arnoult, and other competent artists to produce large engravings of contemporary personalities. These for the most part depicted members of the French royal family and court circle, actors and actresses, and other well-known characters, not always named on the print. A "Man of Quality" (fig. 25) is almost certainly a portrait, which, when suitably colored as many of the prints were, could

be pinned up or framed for decorative effect. It is wrong to take such a print, as some writers on costume have done, for a fashion plate recording what was worn or likely to be worn in the year in which it was engraved.

The decorative character of these distinguished prints was often enhanced by "dressing" or overlaying them with small pieces of fabric, lace, or paper.³⁵ The finest series of such prints is that in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City. In figure 26, the outlines of the engraving were carefully cut with a

³⁵ See F. G. ROE, "Prints and Tinsel," *Connoisseur* (1932), vol. 89, p. 302.



Figure 25.—MAN OF QUALITY at the court of Louis XIV. Engraving by Jean de St. Jean, 1693. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)

knife, and selected pieces of small-pattern fabrics were mounted on stiff paper forming an underlay to the print.

In England, there was no fashion journalism or series of prints that can be regarded as illustrations of late 17th-century fashion. Some use can be made of the engravings after Marcellus Laroon, which were first sold separately and later published in 1711 as the *Cryes of London*,³⁶ to illustrate costume in England, but neither these nor the illustrations of English men and women which appear in general works on the costume of Europe can be accepted as fashion plates. Other series, such as the plates on the dress of Augsburg engraved by Jeremias Wolff, belong more to

³⁶ *The Cryes of the City of London, Drawne after the Life*, delineated by M. Lauron, engraved by P. Tempest (London: H. Overton, 1711).

the history of costume than to the history of fashion.

In the early years of the 18th century, Bernard Picard, best known for his great illustrated work on the religions of the world, made a few small and very neat engravings of fashionable ladies, which were published in Amsterdam in the 1720s. These engravings, some dated 1703, should not be classed as fashion plates; like the Le Clerc engraving of the man in rhinegrave breeches (fig. 15), they are from drawing books. Some of them, part reengraved by G. Bickham, Jr., were reissued in London after 1732.³⁷

In Paris there was a revival of the fashion plate in the late 1720s. The still-existing *Mercure de France*, direct successor of the *Mercure Galant*, carried an occasional fashion article with engravings of dress accessories. In March 1729 (fig. 27), there is a not-very-well-defined sketch of a lady with her page, meeting a gentleman. The accompanying paragraphs are not valuable but contain a recommendation for "garnitures" to be had from La Demoiselle Perronet, in the Cour Abbatial of St. Germain des Pres. As for "coeffures et têtes . . . on les coeiffe sur une poupée."

In the same year, 1729, a set of eight fashion plates entitled *Recueil des Differentes Modes du Temps* was issued by Herisset apparently to advertise a modiste called Chéreau at the "Grand St. Remy" in the Rue St. Jacques. They are carefully drawn and show back and front views as well as indicating materials (fig. 28). No accompanying text has been found, but as they are known in two versions, one said to have been printed in Germany, it is likely that some descriptions were prepared for the export market.³⁸

The French engravers working in England—Gravelot, Grignon, and Boitard—produced some dated portraits of English ladies which can be used as fashion illustrations. The caricature scenes, "Taste à la Mode, 1735" and "Taste à la Mode, 1745," published by Robert Sayer in 1749,³⁹ also may serve as records of fashion. There was, however, no journal of fashion in England before the reign of George III. Indeed, there seems to have been no publication or series of prints to give guidance to the fashion trade in Europe in the mid-18th century.

³⁷ *A new Drawing book of Modes*, by Mons B. Picart (printed for Richard Ware at the Bible & Sun in Amen Corner, Warwick Lane, London; no date).

³⁸ R. COLAS, *Bibliographie du costume* (1933), nos. 2502, 2503.

³⁹ G. PASTON, *Social Caricature in the 18th Century* (1905), pl. facing p. 10.



Figure 26.—DRESSED PRINT, ca. 1695. The engraving of Madame la Duchesse d'Aumont is embellished with small pieces of velvet, figured silk, and lace. (Courtesy of The Pierpont Morgan Library.)



Figure 27.—FASHION PLATE depicting a lady with her page being saluted by a gentleman.
From the *Mercur de France*, March 1729. (Courtesy of British Museum, London.)



Figure 28.—FASHION PLATE, the first of the series *Recueil des différentes Modes du Temps*. The fabric of the dress on the right is a moiré or watered silk, on the left a “lace-pattern” brocade, often wrongly ascribed to the period of Louis XIII (1610–43). Issued by Herisset, ca. 1730. (Author’s collection.)

Technical information together with some fashion plates was available in the 1760s in various volumes of the French *Encyclopédie*. M. de Garsault wrote the section on the art of the tailor (1769) as well as sections on wigs and wigmaking. The engravings by Jean Le Gros (fig. 29) were of practical use to hairdressers; a similar book of hairstyle by James Stewart was published in England.⁴⁰

The single-sheet almanac decorated with engravings of contemporary events continued to be published in France in the 18th century,⁴¹ but pictures in the English university almanacs were mainly topographical or historical. The next development was the issue of annual memorandum books or pocket diaries, which sometimes had a fashion plate as a frontispiece. For example, the *Ladies Museum or Pocket Memorandum Book*, 1774, contained an engraving of a "Lady in the most fashionable dress of the year 1773." This appeared not very long after the first production of Oliver Goldsmith's comedy *She Stoops to Conquer*, which contains the following dialogue (Act 2):

Mrs. Hardcastle: Pray, how do you like this head,
Mr. Hastings?

Mr. Hastings: Extremely elegant and degagée, upon
my word, Madam. Your friseur is a Frenchman,
I suppose?

Mrs. Hardcastle: I protest, I dressed it from a print
in the ladies memorandum-book for the last year.

She Stoops to Conquer was written in 1772–73, and, although a memorandum book published at this date and containing fashion plates of headdresses has not been traced, it is very likely that one existed.

But before this, in 1770, *The Lady's Magazine or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* had begun its long career which lasted until 1837. Figure 30 shows a typical fashion plate for 1774. A lady in full court dress is talking to another in visiting dress: behind, a third in full dress but without side hoops talks to a friend in traveling dress with a calash hood; in the background a lady in riding dress looks out of the window. Artistically such a fashion plate is of no great distinction, but it served a purpose—to give information about current fashions—very much better than the more spectacularly illustrated productions such as Heideloff's *Gallery of Fashion*.

The 18th-century reading public became increas-



Figure 29.—ENGRAVING BY JEAN LE GROS depicting French hair style, ca. 1760. From *L'Art de la Coiffure*. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)

ingly fashion conscious, and there are several series of French colored prints, the finest of them by Moreau le Jeune from 1775 onward, which have high artistic merit and have been sought continuously by collectors. Their purpose, however, was explicitly "pour servir à l'histoire des Modes et du Costume des Français dans le XVIII^{me} siècle." The prints are strongly romanticized and must be regarded as a record of something between historical and fancy dress. The accompanying text names but only briefly describes the dresses and then passes on to facetious moralizing.

In the same way in London in 1794, Nicolaus Heideloff, whose *Gallery of Fashion* was an imitation of one of the French series by Esnaut and Rappily entitled *La Galerie des Modes*, though claiming that the dresses he described were real ones, seems to have

⁴⁰ J. LE GROS, *L'Art de la coiffure* (1768). JAMES STEWART, *Plocosmos or the whole Art of Hairdressing* (1782).

⁴¹ C. L. REGNAULT DE SAVIGNY, *Les almanachs illustrés du XVIII^{me} siècle* (1909).



Figure 30.—PLATE SHOWING fashionable dress at Weymouth. From *The Lady's Magazine*, 1774. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)

had as an objective the formation of a sort of picture gallery of costume portraits of English ladies. Heideloff called it a Repository, which is what we would call an archive today, but the term came to be used by Rudolph Ackermann for his general magazine, *The Repository of the Arts . . .*, published between 1809 and 1828 (see p. 89). The ladies in Heideloff's aquatints are all different in the sense that they are dressed differently and doing different things, but the variations are mostly fanciful (fig. 31). In fact, the Heideloff prints served to fill picture books or to be pinned up or framed on walls; they do not differ greatly in their approach from the series of the Bonnarts and their contemporaries during the reign of Louis XIV.

It is not proposed to give an account here of the



Figure 31.—PRINT OF A LADY IN A COURT DRESS ballooned out by side hoops, by N. Heideloff. The print does not attribute this fashion to any specific year. From the *Gallery of Fashion*, 1798. (Courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London.)

various magazines in the different countries which contained illustrated articles on fashion from 1770 onward, since this would merely repeat material in Mr. Vyvyan Holland's book. Mention should be made, however, of the movements for dress reform motivated either by economic considerations or national feeling. Pamphlets and articles on these subjects were usually without illustrations, except when concerned with the revival or creation of a national costume.⁴² Sweden was the only country where, thanks to the enthusiasm of King Gustavus III, the wearing of national dress was more than an archaizing affectation. Dr. Eva Bergman⁴³ has described the origins of this Swedish national dress in a book that

⁴² Justus Möser of Osnabruck, a prolific writer in the 1770s, discussed, in his *Patriotische Fantasien*, not only national dress but whether magazines should deal with ladies' fashions.

⁴³ EVA BERGMAN, *Nationella Dräkten* (Stockholm, 1938).



Figure 32.—FRONT AND BACK VIEW of a walking dress showing that embroidered muslin was worn even in winter. Here, the muslin is accompanied by a red sarcenet Highland spencer and a matching scarf lined with ermine. From *La Belle Assemblée*, December 1808. (Courtesy of The Cooper Union Museum.)



Figure 33.—WALKING DRESS OF GRAY MERINO. Plate 38, *Ackermann's Repository of the Arts*, 1819. (Courtesy of The Cooper Union Museum.)

is fully documented with tailors' patterns and illustrations. As all details were prescribed by court regulations and very little scope was left for the impulses and personal choice of the wearers, the dress may be regarded to a great extent as a uniform rather than a fashion. Modifications did take place, however, and the style continued into the 19th century. As late as 1827, a pamphlet was published in Copenhagen on the same subject.⁴⁴

With these dress-reform books must also be included

⁴⁴ J. C. RYGE, *Ideer til en national Smag i dansk Klæderdragt* (Copenhagen, 1827).

the books on French Revolution fashions, of which that by Grasset de Saint-Sauveur is the best known.⁴⁵ When reading the descriptions of dress of the various officials, grades, and classes, one wonders whether such clothes were actually worn except on state occasions, or whether they were fanciful novelties which the French officials in their reaction against Louis XVI and his court thought would be appropriate for the new regime. The intention of this book, however, undoubtedly was serious and quite unlike the cari-

⁴⁵ GRASSET DE SAINT-SAUVEUR, *Costume des Représentans du peuple* (Paris, 1795).



Figure 34.—PHILADELPHIA FASHIONS. At this date caps or hats were worn indoors with full evening dress. The details of this print were probably copied from a French or English fashion magazine. From *Godey's Lady's Book*, October 1833. (Courtesy of *The Cooper Union Museum*.)

capture fashion plates often titled "Merveilleuse" or "Incroyable," which amused everyone in the early years of the 19th century.

After 1800 many types of magazines flourished, and the increase in the number of lending and subscription libraries and also of public libraries fostered a new reading public. The magazines had illustrated fashion articles. Often the engravings, and later the lithographs, colored by hand, were their most attractive feature. Not that any great originality was shown; the latest Paris fashions were often adapted, with or without acknowledgment from French fashion plates of the previous season. Men's and children's fashions were not adapted on nearly the same scale. Possibly, men's fashions were more static, or confined to details such as variations in tying the cravat.⁴⁶

Three magazines are worth special mention. *La Belle Assemblée, or Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine* "addressed particularly to the ladies" was published in London from 1806 to 1868 (fig. 32). During the 1820s the plates were of less merit, but there was a later improvement. In 1809, the London print firm of Ackermann began to publish *The Repository of Arts, Letters, Commerce and Manufactures Fashion and Politics*. This magazine had a much wider scope, and its illustrations are of good quality (fig. 33). A special feature was the inclusion of small sample squares of new materials pasted into the text which named and described them. This feature usefully supplements industrial records of the period, which are hard to come by and difficult to handle in that those preserved are usually bulky, not too well dated, and show no distinction between fabrics made for export and those for the home market. Thirdly, from 1830 to 1898, *Godey's Lady's Book* was published in Phila-

⁴⁶ H. LE BLANC, *The Art of Tying the Cravat*, 3rd ed. (1828). *The whole Art of Dress*, by a Cavalry officer (1830). Both of these small books contain fashion plates.

delphia, under titles which varied from time to time (fig. 34). This magazine is much more famous for its other contents than for its fashion articles; its plates, often copied from French engravings, are of low quality and rather crudely colored.

The number, variation, and wide distribution of 19th-century fashion plates has proved something of a handicap to the historian in search of reliable information about dress. Mr. Holland has studied them from the artistic angle, tracing many of the French artists, who did not scorn fashion work. The relation of fashion plates to Victorian dresses as worn has been touched on by many costume writers,⁴⁷ but the relation of the fashion plate to the fashion house has yet to be studied; in particular, the large sheets put out by wholesale drapers and textile manufacturers and the advertisements of ready-made clothing that appear in magazines all through the 19th century have not yet been studied to full advantage.

This account of the fashion plate is necessarily incomplete, because its history and development has not been continuous, and new links may yet be found. The earlier period has been treated in greater detail because it is generally less well-known, and the boundaries between the fashion plate and the costume picture are not all easy to define. The fashion plate has died slowly, the victim of the photograph showing the model wearing actual clothes and the sketch giving the impression of a fashion artist at a dress show. Through the centuries, the fashion plate has provided the link between the wearer and the maker of clothes. It has also attracted as collectors those studying both the social background of a period and the history of costume.

⁴⁷ VYVYAN HOLLAND, *op. cit.* (footnote 1), chap. 5 ff. C. WILLETT CUNNINGTON, *English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century* (1937). JAMES LAVER, *Nineteenth Century Costume* (1947). C. H. GIBBS-SMITH, *The Fashionable Lady in the 19th Century* (1960).

U.S. Government Printing Office : 1967

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402
Price 35 cents