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Flounces and laces

For a few years past, feminine lingerie has been somewhat lacking in fancifulness and that little, gracious air of mystery which tradition demands of Milady's *deshabillé* was sacrificed to a rather lazy wish for the practical, a wish that might well have little by little cancelled the very essence of femininity...

But fashion has changed all that once again. The influence of Victorian days has touched our skirts, lengthened our hemlines with magic suddenness, giving us wasp waists and rounder hips and, after all this, fashion could not entirely neglect the question of undies... To the perdition of our soul, the paths of fashion are strewn with new and ethereal creations: snowy petticoats, flounced «drawers», disturbing accessories reviving the charms of a period which seemed to be for ever gone...

On an ancient theme that, long before our generation, had charmed our grandmothers, modern and delightful variations are being elaborated. Corsets, bust-bodices (Oh ! shades of Victoria !) nothing is lacking in this rustling parade. Of course there are corsets and corsets... and the girdle of today has but little in common with the armour of white drill in which swooned the society ladies of pre-Edwardian days. Dubbed «wasp-waisters», «waist-tighteners», or «waist-squeezers», our corselets of today, devised by the designers of our gowns, are of satin and lace: barely wider than a wide belt, their purpose is to «slenderize» the waist in favour of bust and hips which, from now on, may become more, shall we say — nonchalant ! The «over wasp-waister» (or what you will !) is an amusing, pin-tucked accessory which has inherited from its ancestor the over-bodice, that funny little fan-shaped basque that forms a bustle effect under the gown.

From the revival of billowing skirts must necessarily ensue the revival of petticoats and, in effect, we are now in a period of prosperity for this garment which, more and more, is tending to supplant the straight «princess» styles for afternoon wear. Widened, broadened by flounces or «umbrella» styling, all petticoats today finish with a flounce or embroidery, indiscreetly revealed below the skirt...

Woman will develop a new gesture... that of

The eternal rebirth

Fashion is always called an eternal beginning. But then, so is Life itself ! Nothing is new under the sun, but time fuses all things together again, adapts and corrects all that can be adapted and corrected and, on the foundations of the past, builds the future.

The past can at times be an inspiring Muse to guide the poets and artists who create fashion: manufacturers, designers and the couturiers who interpret.

See, for example, this charming old engraving of

raising her skirts, but not just in a corner ! With a gracious, deliciously feminine movement. Perhaps we shall learn to poke into huge alms-purses «like Grandmother used to wear», our lipstick, powder-case, cigarette case and lace hanky... And why not ?

Lawns, cotton and linen fabrics are again revealing the crisp grace of flounces, ruches, pipings; eyelet embroidery is *à la mode*, a naughty pretext for black velvet ribbons, charming anachronisms reminiscent of the French can-can.

This mode for pretty «nothings» was also bound to influence knicker styles; although modernized, these nether-garments too evoke the light seductiveness of the Blue Danube Waltz... Here too are embroidered flounces, deliciously intricate. In lawn or muslin, they billow, are gathered, are trimmed with insertions, with eyelet, with pin-tucks, drawn-thread work, incrustations...

Kate Greenway pantaloons have returned, clasped below the knee with an open-work garter or are as frilly as an opera dancer's skirt. A thousand fantasies now feminize this once despised garment.

The demureness of 1948 nightgowns is a little bewildering. Satin has yielded to muslins and immaculate lawns: small embroidered Peter Pan collars, long sleeves caught in a narrow wrist-band... pin-up girls must learn to become *ingénues* ! Flounces, gathers, tucks and pleats must be very skilfully devised to hide the revealing charm of these crisp, romantic cotton fabrics, as fresh as the first spring snowdrop.

Laces still blossom over satin, Paris point still traces its capricious arabesques over pearly crepe, but the trend certainly shows preference for feather-stitched lawns adorned with drawn-thread work, or for misty, transparent opals.

Skirts are flared to give that wide, frothy appearance and a narrow waist still further enhances this graceful movement... Illusions ? Perhaps ! But how necessary to idealize feminine elegance. The time is coming when women will prefer the warm, perfumed air of a boudoir, perfect background for femininity, to the cold, straight lines of a modern «studio».

Comtesse de Semont.

a mid-nineteenth century fashion which 1948 couturiers may well render — after one hundred years — in a flounced organdie skirt over a watered taffeta, blues and pinks of those soft pastel shades, the well-dressed woman of today so appreciates. Flounces are ideal for the long, bouffant gowns billowing over starched petticoats: the new season's collections will reveal a number of creations of this type.

Juliette Ferrant.