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Historic Costume the Mother of Modern Vogue

By CLARA JORDAN

The Egyptian head-dress has given us many suggestions.

That this period of modern smartness should be an adaptation from the darkness of a buried age, and should broach the essence of Egyptian grace, Grecian leisure and Roman luxury, is a proposition that seems at once unique and great. And yet, would "milady" but stop to consider, she would realize that this fact is not indeed so unusual nor so extraordinary. For, even tho the quaint frock of simple line, with the lotus-flower design, and the lovely evening wrap with its Grecian drapes which she purchased from Madame, and the quaint strapped pumps of gold brocade, seem strange and fascinating, they are in reality only an expression of the influence ancient art and historic decoration have had for all time upon artistic development.

And if "milady" would but visit a modiste's shop and look not only at the lovely creations waiting her approval, but would consult with Madame's designers who visualized these frocks, she would learn many and strange things. When inspiration was waning or harmonizing ideas and suggestions and would weave thrilling water, blowing grass, and progress of the Nile were found not to be a part of the time when Egypt swayed the world. Textiles of a finer weave but of richer material, heads of soft colors and striking design, head bands similar to scarabes and winged globes, slanting girdles worn alike on evening gown and afternoon frock and even some types of jewelry show the brilliancy and yet the simplicity of the Egyptian period, in the manner of their adaptation.

The art of Egypt gave to the Greeks an inspiration that lead them on to unrivaled creativeness. The beauty-loving souls of Greece feasted on the ideas and ideals of the Egyptians, which when wrought in combination with their own true sense of color and proportion, left monuments of such artistic value that they have been an inspiration for all modern workmen. It was perhaps this that guided the Greeks in constructing their Parthenon, one of the most perfectly proportioned pieces of architecture in the world. Frescoes were used, statues of all kinds ornamented and beautified their cities. These same ideas were carried out in the textiles and garments of the people and so thru the ages have come to bear an important influence on the modes of today.

Many textiles for use in household furnishings, as drapes, curtains and upholstery, are distinctly Grecian. Furniture of severe Doric types, as well as the more pleasing Corinthian styles are borrowed from Greece. Most striking of all, are the gracefully draped evening wraps, gay in color and exquisite in line, which seem to be an almost direct adaptation. Gowns of soft wools and silks, in silvered shades, always with the emphatic little drape that catches "milady's" eye, are a distinct heritage from the Greeks.

Intricate borders on gowns, wraps, scarfs and negliges are pleasantly suggestive of the frescoes on Grecian temples and the sleeveless jacket so frequently seen at a sports gathering is taken almost directly from the olden Greeks. Silver patterns, simple, yet artistic, bear the Grecian influence and the branched candlesticks so highly prized now might have been taken from the altar of one of the gods, so Grecian are they.

With the coming of the Romans into Greece, and their consequent carrying back and adapting of Grecian art and decoration, the beauty-loving souls of the Egyptians and the gracefulness of the Grecians was enriched with the more deeply colorful and intense influence of the Romans. To these art-lovers the inspiration of these countries was very welcome and they used some of the ideas entirely as they stood, while others they modified over. Hence, the buildings were larger and more massive providing every comfort and luxury possible. So too, this same influence was seen in the costumes of the people for they were an attractive combination of color and line giving at the same time much freedom. Tunics, scarfs and sandals that were used at the time are seen in disguised form today. The much strapped, frivolous little slippers of metal brocades and fancy buckles that are so picturesque at "milady's" ball are perhaps the most especially Roman types. And so this step from a buried age to modern times, is not so wide nor so sudden as it first seems, but really is more of a steady progress of successions which, beginning with the Pharaohs, has found its ultimate end in modern costume thru the media of literature, art and museums. And so too, this step is not followed by designers only, but by clothing workers and students who have found it a most interesting and profitable study. Courses in historic costumes are offered in the home economics course at Iowa State College which tie up the customs of ancient times with the problems of today.

The Greek chalybs from which our modern cape is adapted.