

# What Well Dressed Women Will Wear

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## ASIATIC, OR VAMPIRE, MOTIF THE LATEST IN EVENING GOWNS

### New Spring Gowns to Have Plentiful Display of Crystal Embroidery.

If you wish to be fastidious in your use of words it is quite possible to explain the incoming fashion for evening gowns by calling them Asiatic. The popular word would be vampire.

Not that the public is overly familiar with Mr. Bram Stoker's "Dracula" or that Rumanian superstition has become universal through that particularly ally's part in the war. Nothing so far fetched brought the word vampire, as noun and verb, into the common currency of our language; the "movies" did it.

To the furthest stretches of the Asiatic routes across this vast continent goes the "movie" vampire, and the film is alone responsible for one of the vivid words of the twentieth century.

When one tries to explain, therefore, the sudden new movement in evening frocks for spring and summer it is best to speak in the vernacular. It is understood. As between Asia and the vampire, Semiramis is to Theda Bara as the Cambrian marshes are to Main street.

So will we "ramp" when we wear the new spring clothes, is the question asked by men. Will there come about that horrible spectacle of the stout and the middle aged attempting the impossible—to be subtle and delicate, sensuous and alluring? Heaven forbid. You remember the slithering old coquette wearing fancy dress in "Lord and Lady Alky," who explained that she was "after Reynolds," to which Everingham replied, "God help Reynolds." No one wants to see that spectacle repeated among one's friends out of comedy. The fluttering dove attitude is bad enough when one is over fifty and too well fed; but the serpent attitude is repelling.

### Dangerously Effective.

Semiramis certainly tempted men in her Babylonian costumes, although she was fat, undoubtedly, as she was running true to Orientalism, and the historic impression is that she was not like Theda Bara in appearance, but her vampirish costumes, while of a different cut and quantity, were surely and dangerously effective.

She may have started even an entirely new fashion for Babylon when she hurriedly went forth half dressed, as legend tells, to quell the Babylonian revolt, and certainly this episode is indicative of her triumph over men, but as a rule she was swathed and wrapped with sparkling and transparent draperies. That was the Asiatic type of seductive clothing.

Was it because she wore so much white, by the way, that she was turned into a dove when she died, as legend again has it? Strange fate for a vampire. Did she like it, we wonder.

All of which is interesting in the light that it is she and her kind from whom the new evening gowns are taken, and not from the modern version of the vampire translated into a symbolic figure, with dark skirts wrapped about the figure, with arms bare and writhing like young snakes.

The new costumes are of sturdier build, coming down to us from a more powerful type of woman. Yet they are modified, even at that, to the demands of the day and to the social environment which envelops and protects us. Captious critics may retort that this is the only visible thing that does protect the fashionable woman in evening clothes.

### Change From Victorianism.

The French designers say that in introducing this abrupt about-face from the panner of Mozart and the huge crinolines of the Spanish seventeenth century, they are seeking to please the American woman; why it is not easy to say, for last season they insisted upon our limited purchases and the self-evident fact that Parisienne and Spanish women of wealth and social distinction were depended upon to absorb their time and talent.

It is more likely to be the truth that the hoopskirt and pannier, the girdle bodice and uncovered shoulder, the wreaths of roses and grapes in Bacchante profusion have begun to pall on the Parisiennes and on that other large and prosperous European set who follow the dictates of Paris without crossing a "t" or dotting an "i." This set has been spending money lavishly with thoughts of brilliant gaiety always in their schemes of daily life and they insist upon something new for their money at a season when the French have always demanded a change in reticent to keep step with the alluring and refreshing French spring.

Naturally the Paris dressmakers are sufficiently canny to realize that the launching of a style that might please the American women as well as the French would be excellent business sagacity. They rarely lack that sense.

There is a whisper that as France exports an astounding avalanche of American tourists between May and November she really wishes to put forward the entire product of an enterprising and ingenious nation in a becoming manner, an exhibition that will not raise arguments as to their impossibility to suit our people. These arguments were unceasing last summer, you may remember, in regard to certain dominating fashions.



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Probably there is verity in this. It would be the best way to get money. We have it to spend and France needs it. Therefore the demand and supply should be arranged to meet.

Whether or not the long, clinging swirling kind of frock really pleases the American is left to the immediate future. The news item is that it now appears and is waiting for acceptance. It offers itself as a drastic change from the butterfly futility of the array of frocks that have blown hither and thither over the world since there was a revival of the artificialities of the two centuries that preceded the nineteenth.

### Launched at Staggering Prices.

About these new offerings there is a vivid suggestion of those thousand dollar gowns built by the Callot Sisters in Paris last autumn. The observers were shocked by their price. They were the sensation of the season.

Before last August five hundred dollars for one gown was an extravagance which merited gasps and indignation. A thousand dollars, which was the new price, fell with a dull thud upon the public's ear. It meant disaster; it was the portent of coming trouble. And the trouble came on schedule time.

As a forerunner of high prices it has its place in sartorial history, this series of Babylonian evening gowns shown in the exquisite Chinese salon of the Callot house on the Champs Elysees. Just there was the beginning of what Lawrence Reamer calls the high cost of no clothes.

American dressmakers immediately took up the cue. They vied one with the other to value their gowns at prices that one associated with emeralds and pearls. These exaggerated valuations soon exhausted themselves, for there was a suspicion that they were used for advertising purposes; yet the entire range of prices, rising on the tide with these sensational ones, has remained at a high level never before reached since the figleaf was discarded for cloth.

Callot, like Poiret, has a weird, an uncanny, way of carelessly throwing a fashion into the market without unduly accentuating it and the world passes it by with amusement or tolerance, without suspicion and never a desire for possession. Then the world awakes some morning to find that special fashion is in possession of the field. Over and over are women and commercialists fooled in this manner.

These Babylonian gowns at a thousand dollars are not actually copied to-day, but they suggested the use of sparkling colored crystals to make a frock shimmer and glisten like the Taj Mahal. They suggested the voluminous use of flexible, transparent drapery to cling to the figure, to soften it and enhance it.

They suggested the high décolletage which merely veils the flesh and covers the arms with swarthy of tulle, some times heavily jeweled after the manner of high caste Asiatic women. It is these features of fashion that have now come to pass.

### Our Interpretation of It.

Do not get alarmed at the introduction of Babylonian costumery or the mention of it and see in the mind's eye a collection of modern women looking like temple dancers or imitations of Ruth St. Denis. Even if this should come to pass it may be permissible to say it would not appear much less clothed than at certain times during the last four years, when semi-nudity had reached a state of acceptance that had not prevailed since the days immediately after the American and French revolutions.

The draperies then were so transparent that the managers of the famous and stately Assembly Balls in Philadelphia requested a lady of high degree not to array herself for any future ball in the type of costume which had created a scandal at her last public appearance.

Philadelphia society then led the American continent, and it took this breach of the decorous, as it was termed, with as much seriousness and indignation as the boulevard crowd took the lack of clothes of Mme. Hamelin when she was dressed, according to a French journal of that time, "as a Roman lady, but not unlike one of those matrons whose principal attire was their native modesty."

The influence of the recent four years has reduced resistance. It would seem, to transparency in women's dress. One can be sure of this by going through the byways and hedges to see how easily people adopt certain revealing fashions that had been taboo for a century. The entire world adjusted itself to this state of affairs in evening dress. What was once considered scandalous was, in considered merely fashionable.

Actually the new spring gowns are not as shocking to the average observer as the topless bodices and the knee length skirts that soon became commonplace in this country after their sensational introduction during the war. Even the most strictly conservative of women's journals, that once would not permit a décolleté frock published on its pages, now permits a frock that is guileless of any material whatever above the bust. So time flies.

### Sparkling Crystals Prevail.

Here are the salient points of the new style as it has come before our vision this early in the season. First and

chiefly: A plentiful play of colored crystal embroidery, the kind that is translucent and sparkles like snow when it falls through sunlight, or a half faded rainbow over the ocean. There are a few frocks so extreme in this fashioning that they could claim kinship to the one worn by Mme. Aida in "Marouf."

Another dominant feature is the hip girdle, wide, sinuous and glittering, and the slim, straight line between the shoulders and hips which disregards the normal waistline. The long clinging skirt is also a part of the scheme, one that is definitely longer than the flounced and bunched-up skirt which has found favor in the eyes of the public for a year. There is a significant point also in the sleeves, which actually cover the arms to the wrists in some frocks; the bare arm with the V-shaped opening beneath it to the waist is threatened with extinction. It was Grecian, and we are not to be Grecian.

As a concrete example here is a gown of the new type: Gray tulle over silver tulle with a chiffon foundation; great clusters of opalescent embroidery done with faceted crystals and what we once called fishscales; the décolletage of the bodice not extending more than five inches from the base of neck; the full sleeves covering part of the hand and wrapping themselves around the arm between shoulder and wrist, showing epaulettes of gleaming crystals from elbow to wrist.

### Babylonian Beading on Serge.

The lining to the bodice, built of several layers of tulle and chiffon, does not extend but half way up the figure, and the upper part of tulle, arranged in two layers, is so plastered down on the skin that it gives the semblance of flesh, softened, veiled, made artistic. There is a truly gorgeous girle of the sparkling beading about the hips, from which drops a swathing skirt that trails on the floor at the back, but is rather short in front and at sides. The stockings that go with the frock are opalescent and the brocade heeled sandals are jeweled.

Such are the component parts of a modern Babylonian evening gown. The details differ in each two frocks. Undoubtedly the fashion will have growing influence as the season progresses.

losing probably its initial direction, but not losing in momentum.

This idea of splashing translucent beads and glittering scales on clothes may have preceded or followed the Asiatic evening frock. It was sprung on Paris in February, which seems to prove that it followed Callot's attempt to create a Byzantine atmosphere earlier in the season.

The introduction of jeweled garters with brilliant frocks was the first strong originality that emphasized the fashion. After that came the exhibition by dressmakers of serge, trest and taffeta frocks heavily garnished with sparkling bits of crystals. Velvet basques appeared with flickering lines of these glass bits, in design, running down the front and edging the sleeves. Embroidery in silken floss well nigh disappeared before February arrived, although stitchery, especially in lattice work design and done in cotton threads, will continue to rule informal gowns and hats.

### It is not quite according to our ideas

of fitness that a colored cloth frock should bear on its surface a mass of colored beads and glittering fish scales, but no doubt we will accept it, after argument, as recently we accepted the

### Skirts to Be Long and Clinging, With Wide Glittering Hip Girdle.

new fashion, as it fits into the scheme of things with startling adaptability. It has exactly the right opalescent tones. It suggests all the fairy tale lore of our childhood, sparkling tales of Arabia and Persia.

That the emphasis will be laid on the hips there is small doubt in the minds of the dressmakers of spring clothes. They see in the evening gowns that this fashion has sufficiently vital force to spread itself to all types of costumes. The lowered waistline is expected to rule. It is an easy way to disguise the thickness reversal of the Victoria, Second Empire or Louis XV. silhouette, whichever you choose to call it. Such a change is what



Evening frock on the left is of black satin and ivory lace with cream silk net over shoulders. The Babylonian gown on the right is of old blue satin and lace with bodice of net heavily embroidered with glittering fishscales and crystals. The frock on the seated figure is built of several layers of opalescent chiffon with crystals bodice and neck chain.

Dressmakers ardently desire a reversal of a prevailing style. With it in their hands, however, they are not quite sure of its power to impose a different contour on the mass of buyers, so here in America, as there in Paris, a medley of fashions is presented for every woman's choice at the opening of a new season. The single new development that runs like a scarlet thread through the exhibition is this Babylonian contour, the translucent beading with scales and the high décolletage without lining. It is the fashion set by Callot and Madeleine et Madeleine last August in direct



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use of padded milk roses on dark blue frocks, and later a light design of jet sequins. Mother-of-pearl has been quickly caught up into the whirlwind of this

opposition to a world full of hoopskirts, crinolines, panniers, Victorian scalloped flounces. It was greeted with tolerance and amusement. Now—will it win?