

MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE FAMOUS BEAUTIES OF OLD



THERE were no women in the classic days of Greece, or in the golden age of France, who would not compare unfavorably with the modern beauty of today.

Probably there isn't any girl with a pretension to a good profile but that knows in her secret heart that she wouldn't exchange noses with the Venus de Milo and who would not, if she were already possessed of the exact counterpart of the Milo's straight line of forehead and nose, consider herself afflicted.

It is certain that her waist measure is a thing which, no matter how highly she had been educated in art ideals, nor how open she is to the conviction as to its artistic proportions, no modern beauty would stand for.

There are many reasons lately advanced for her way of thinking. That the modern beauty is at least superior to the first contemporaries of the Venus, and that she even excels the famous belles of more recent days, there is growing evidence and conviction. Take, for instance, the women of the court of Louis XIV., who are famed as the most perfect galaxy of beauties that the world has known. It is evident that both the portraits and the pen pictures of that day have surrounded them with a halo by which the modern girl has unjustly suffered in comparison.

What beauty of today, for instance, no matter how regal her charms, would ever hope to hear herself described in such words as these: "Never was there a face so spiritual, so touching, so speaking; never a freshness like hers; never so many graces or more intelligence; never so much gaiety and liveliness; never a creature more bewitching." Or, "She had an angelic face which later had a dazzling lustre. Her beauty consisted in incomparable tones of the complexion. Her eyes, less large than soft and brilliant, were of the blue of turquoise. With this, silvery blond hair, and the nameless something which is called 'air,' there was elegance in her whole person, and at every point a supreme style."

These are the descriptions of Mme. de Caylus and of Mme. de Longueville, and were written by one of their own sex at that.

Flattery Created Models of Beauty.

Flattery, exaggerated, extravagant, and shorn of all its subtle quality, was the coin of conversational exchange. The "Chevalier" wrote of Henriette, the duchesse of Orleans:

"As to the features of her face, we never see anything so complete. Her eyes were keen without being rude, the mouth admirable, the nose perfect. Her skin was white beyond expression, her figure refined. Her mind as well as her soul animated her body, she had it even in her feet, and danced better than any other woman in the world. Whoso approached her remained convinced that no one so perfect could be seen."

Of the many eulogies of Ninon de Lenche one reads: "She had a beautiful figure and hair of the finest chestnut ever seen. Her face is round, her complexion bright, the mouth agreeable, the lips rosy, a little dimple in her chin, her eyes black and brilliant, full of fire, smiling, and the countenance refined, gay, and intelligent."

Of a pair of eyes it was written: "She had eyes so fine, so lovely, so loving, so full of intelligence, that one can never sustain their brilliancy or detach one's own eyes from them."

Today a man says that the object of his admiration is "all right." If he is exuberant he will say: "Have you seen so and so? By Jove, she's a peach."

He expresses his most artistic perceptions of the charms of a goddess by saying: "I walked home with a pretty girl today." Or, "I went in to dinner tonight with a stunner."

His compliments are either pleasantly ironical or artistically subtle. If they were not, the modern girl would openly ridicule him. He never lets himself go. In his love letters he is businesslike and cuts out all sentiment that isn't expressed in "devotedly yours." If he writes of a new feminine discovery he confines his description to "You must see her."

Moderns Fail to Laude Heroine's Beauty.

It is the same way in novels. The modern novelist only describes the beauties of his heroine by suggestion. He says that she has charm, attractiveness, character, and individuality, but there are no descriptions which set down with exactitude the charms of the modern beauty, which can take the place of the letters and literature in which the rhapsodies of the French beauties are preserved. All this detracts from the reputation of ideal beauty of the modern woman, even if it adds to that which she already possesses for intelligence, charm, and popularity.

In the seventeenth century flattery of speech and letters was supplemented by a flattery of art far greater than today. Mignard, who was the official painter to the court of Louis XIV. from the time of the queen mother, was noted for his flattering touch. With him truth gave place to a tender grace and elegance. From his hand were portraits of Mme. de Maintenon, Mme. de Sevigne, Mme. de Montespan, Mme. de Villiers, Ninon de Lenche, the Duchesse de Orleans, and Marie Mancini. He treated all his royal subjects with imagination and unblushingly made the beauty of shoulder, bust, and limbs rival the outlines of Diana.

On the other hand, Rigaud, his contemporary, always painted truth, letting it dominate his desire to please and, although he was a popular man's artist, princesses, queens, courtesans, and marquises gave a cold shoulder to his studio.

"If I make them look natural they do not find themselves beautiful enough; if I flatter them the likeness is not good," wailed this artist.

The extreme freshness of the faces of some of the portraits of this period is also due to the rouge, which was applied in proportion to the rank, and which was faithfully reproduced in the fanciful coloring which is seen in some of Nattier's women.

Greek Women Not Up to Ideal.

Of the Greek art it is generally conceded that there were no women of Greece who compared to the classic ideal. The Venus of Milo is a composite ideal whose counterpart never existed. There has recently been thrown a new light upon the strange line of the Venus' left side, which declares that she was planned to stand in a niche, and that her right side only was the one intended for view. The modern front view, as has been pointed out, "exhibits the beauty of Aphrodite's right side and at the same time shows an unpleasantly straight line and an impossible hip on her left." This justifies the modern woman's openly expressed hostility to the Venus waist line.

In spite of the criticism which is turned upon her, there are artists innumerable who declare that the figure lately attained by the modern woman, when it is not exaggerated, has given her the best of lines. The curve at the back of the hips, when slight, and the almost straight line in front approaches more nearly to the best ideal than anything she has hitherto evolved.

The ideal of Greek art which runs through the early centuries is also closely conformed to by many a modern woman. The harmonious straight line, the regular features, the low, straight brow framed by wavy hair, the long, straight, and well formed nose, and the richly curved mouth



LILLIAN RUSSELL



MAXINE ELLIOTT



PRINCESS HENRY OF PLESS



EVELYN NESBIT THAW

which is the Greek symbol, is brought to a perfection in Gladys Deacon which it can hardly be believed existed in the days when art was imagined rather than copied.

The Princess Henry of Pless outclasses any of the French beauties in regularity of features combined with vivacity, attractiveness, and charm. Lillian Russell's beauty surely cannot be equaled in its unfading quality even by that of the perennial French beauties. Maxine Elliott's regular profile and rare coloring might be described in the glowing words which are written of Ninon and yet but half express and far less exaggerate.

Modern Beauty Arts Unknown of Old.

The modern beauty has also a thousand arts at her finger ends which were not known even at the French court. In the first place, she makes a fetish of health. The most simple and nourishing food, the most peaceful and regular beauty sleep, the deepest of breathing, the curst of air, a life out of doors, the most regular of baths, and the benefits of regular massage are all arts to which she resorts frequently and often practices regularly. She has every art

known to science to help her beauty and every precept for a healthful and beautiful body is constantly being put under her eye. She has the aid of magical lotions and waters which outrival the perfumed baths of the orient. She has skin foods which are all powerful in comparison with the baths of milk indulged in by the women of France.

There is nothing in the way of mechanical art which is not offered to correct her slightest defect. The most wonderful of all is that she has the supreme taste to know just where to let the touch of science supplement that of nature. Her eye for color and line has been so educated that each beautiful woman is an artist in her way and seldom makes a mistake in any detail of her appearance. Her coiffure is always perfect, her hands exquisite, her skin is beautifully groomed and soft as velvet.

Her variety is superior to that of any period. She conforms to no type, but is infinite in her individuality. She studies her own style and develops it to perfection. In all this she answers to an ideal which is infinitely higher than that of any other age. She fulfills a demand for variety, individuality, and versatility which has not been dreamed of in previous periods.