FOREWORD

WOMAN AS DECORATION is intended as a sequel to The Art of Interior Decoration (Grace Wood and Emily Burbank).

Having assisted in setting the stage for woman, the next logical step is the consideration of woman, herself, as an important factor in the decorative scheme of any setting,—the vital spark to animate all interior decoration, private or public. The book in hand is intended as a brief guide for the woman who would understand her own type,—make the most of it, and know how simple a matter it is to be decorative if she will but master the few rules underlying all successful dressing. As the costuming of woman is an art, the history of that art must be known—to a certain extent—by one who would be an intelligent student of our subject. With the assistance of thirty-three illustrations to throw light upon the text, we have tried to tell the beguiling story of decorative woman, as she appears in frescoes and bas reliefs of Ancient
FOREWORD

Egypt, on Greek vases, the Gothic woman in tapestry and stained glass, woman in painting, stucco and tapestry of the Renaissance, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century woman in portraits.

Contemporary woman’s costume is considered, not as fashion, but as decorative line and colour, a distinct contribution to the interior decoration of her own home or other setting. In this department, woman is given suggestions as to the costuming of herself, beautifully and appropriately, in the ball-room, at the opera, in her boudoir, sun-room or on her shaded porch; in her garden; when driving her own car; by the sea, or on the ice.

Woman as Decoration has been planned, in part, also to fill a need very generally expressed for a handbook to serve as guide for beginners in getting up costumes for fancy-dress balls, amateur theatricals, or the professional stage.

We have tried to shed light upon period costumes and point out ways of making any costume effective.

Costume books abound, but so far as we know,
this is the first attempt to confine the vast and perplexing subject within the dimensions of a small, accessible volume devoted to the principles underlying the planning of all costumes, regardless of period.

The author does not advocate the preening of her feathers as woman's sole occupation, in any age, much less at this crisis in the making of world history; but she does lay great emphasis on the fact that a woman owes it to herself, her family and the public in general, to be as decorative in any setting, as her knowledge of the art of dressing admits. This knowledge implies an understanding of line, colour, fitness, background, and above all, one's own type. To know one's type, and to have some knowledge of the principles underlying all good dressing, is of serious economic value; it means a saving of time, vitality and money.

The watchword of to-day is efficiency, and the keynote to modern costuming, appropriateness. And so the spirit of the time records itself in the interesting and charming subdivision of woman's attire.

One may follow Woman Decorative in the
FOREWORD

Orient on vase, fan, screen and kakemono; as she struts in the stiff manner of Egyptian bas reliefs, across walls of ancient ruins, or sits in angular serenity, gazing into the future through the narrow slits of Egyptian eyes, oblivious of time; woman, beautiful in the European sense, and decorative to the superlative degree, on Greek vase and sculptured wall. Here in rhythmic curves, she dandles lovely Cupid on her toe; serves as vestal virgin at a woodland shrine; wears the bronze helmet of Minerva; makes laws, or as Penelope, the wife, wearily awaits her roving lord. She moves in august majesty, a sore-tried queen, and leaps in merry laughter as a care-free slave; pipes, sings and plies the distaff. Sauntering on, down through Gothic Europe, Tudor England, the adolescent Renaissance, Bourbon France, into the picturesque changes of the eighteenth century, we ask, can one possibly escape our theme—Woman as Decoration? No, for she is carved in wood and stone; as Mother of God and Queen of Heaven gleams in the jeweled windows of the church, looks down in placid serenity on lighted altar; is woven in tapestry, in fact dominates
all art, painting, stucco or marble, throughout the ages.

If one would know the story of Woman's evolution and retrogression—that rising and falling tide in civilisation—we commend a study of her as she is presented in Art. A knowledge of her costume frequently throws light upon her age; a thorough knowledge of her age will throw light upon her costume.

A study of the essentials of any costume, of any period, trains the eye and mind to be expert in planning costumes for every-day use. One learns quickly to discriminate between details which are ornaments, because they have meaning, and those which are only illiterate superfluities; and one learns to master many other points.

It is not within the province of this book to dwell at length upon national costume, but rather to follow costume as it developed with and reflected caste, after human society ceased to be all alike as to occupation, diversion and interest.

In the world of caste, costume has gradually evolved until it aims through appropriateness,
at assisting woman to fulfil her rôle. With peasants who know only the traditional costume of their province, the task must often be done in spite of the costume, which is picturesque or grotesque, inconvenient, even impossible; but long may it linger to divert the eye! Russia, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Scandinavia,—all have an endless variety of costumes, rich in souvenirs of folk history, rainbows of colour and bizarre in line, but it is costuming the woman of fashion which claims our attention.

The succeeding chapters will treat of woman, the vital spark which gives meaning to any setting—indoors, out of doors, at the opera, in the ball-room, on the ice—where you will. Each chapter has to do with modern woman and the historical paragraphs are given primarily to shed light upon her costume.

It is shown that woman’s decorative appearance affects her psychology, and that woman’s psychology affects her decorative appearance.

Some chapters may, at first glance, seem irrelevant, but those who have seriously studied any art, and then undertaken to tell its story
briefly in simple, direct language, with the hope of quickly putting audience or reader in touch with the vital links in the chain of evidence, will understand the author’s claim that no detour which illumines the subject can in justice be termed irrelevant. In the detours often lie invaluable data, for one with a mind for research—whether author or reader. This is especially true in connection with our present task, which involves unravelling some of the threads from the tangled skein of religion, dancing, music, sculpture and painting—that mass of bright and sombre colour, of gold and silver threads, strung with pearls and glittering gems strangely broken by age—which tells the epic-lyric tale of civilisation.

While we state that it is not our aim to make a point of fashion as such, some of our illustrations show contemporary woman as she appears in our homes, on our streets, at the play, in her garden, etc. We have taken examples of women’s costumes which are pre-eminently characteristic of the moment in which we write, and as we believe, illustrate those laws upon which we base our deductions concerning
woman as decoration. These laws are: appropriateness of her costume to the occasion; consideration of the type of wearer; background against which costume is to be worn; and all decoration (which includes jewels), as detail with *raison d'être*. The body should be carried with form (in the sporting sense), to assist in giving line to the costume.

The *chic* woman is the one who understands the art of elimination in costumes. Wear your costumes with conviction—by which we mean decide what picture you will make of yourself, make it and then enjoy it! It is only by letting your personality animate your costume that you make yourself superior to the lay figure or the sawdust doll.