CHAPTER XVIII
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE eighteenth century is unique by reason of scientific discoveries, mechanical inventions and chemical achievements, coupled with the gigantic political upheaval of the French Revolution.

It is unique, distinguished and enormously fruitful. For example, the modern frenzy for chintz, which has made our homes burst into bloom in endless variety, had its origin in the eighteenth century looms at Jouy, near Versailles, under the direction of Oberkampf.

Before 1760 silks and velvets decorated man and his home. Royal patronage co-operating with the influence of such great decorators as Percier and Fontaine gave the creating of beautiful stuffs to the silk factories of Lyons.

Printed linens and painted wall papers appeared in France simultaneously, and for the same reason. The Revolution set mass-taste
(which is often stronger than individual inclination), toward unostentatious, inexpensive materials for house furnishing and wearing apparel.

The Revolution had driven out royalty and the high aristocracy who, with changed names lived in seclusion. Society, therefore, to meet the mass-desire, was driven to simple ways of living. Men gave up their silks and velvets and frills, lace and jewels for cloth, linen, and sombre neck-cloths. The women did the same; they wore muslin gowns and their own hair, and went to great length in the affectation of simplicity and patriotic fervour.

We hear that, apropos of America having at this moment entered the great struggle with the Central Powers, simplicity is decreed as smart for the coming season, and that those who costume themselves extravagantly, furnish their homes ostentatiously or allow their tables to be lavish, will be frowned upon as bad form and unpatriotic.

These reactions are inevitable, and come about with the regularity of tides in this world of perpetual repetition.
The belles of the Directorate shook their heads and bobbed their pretty locks at the artificiality Marie Antoinette et cie had practised. I fear they called it sinful art to deftly place a patch upon the face, or make a head-dress in the image of a man-of-war.

Mme. de Staël’s familiar head-dress, twisted and wrapped around her head à la Turque, is said to have had its origin in the improvisation of the court hairdresser. Desperately groping for another version of the top-heavy erection, to humour the lovely queen, he seized upon a piece of fine lace and muslin hanging on a chair at hand, and twisting it, wrapped the thing about the towering wig. As it happened, the chiffon was my lady’s chemise!

We begin the eighteenth century with a full petticoat, trimmed with rows of ruffles or bands; an overskirt looped back into paniers to form the bustle effect; the natural hair powdered; and head-dress of lace, standing out stiffly in front and drooping in a curtain behind.

It was not until the whim of Marie Antoinette decreed it so, that the enormous powdered wigs appeared.
Viennese temperament alone accounts for the moods of this lovely tragic queen, who played at making butter, in a cap and apron, over simple muslin frocks, but outdid her artificial age in love of artifice (not Art) in dress.

This gay and dainty puppet of relentless Fate propelled by varying moods must needs lose her lovely head at last, as symbol of her time.
PLATE XXV
Mrs. Vernon Castle in a summer afternoon costume appropriate for city or country and so adapted to the wearer's type that she is a picture, whether in action; seated on her own porch; having tea at the country club; or in the Winter sun-parlour.
Mrs. Vernon Castle in Afternoon Costume—Summer