XXX

NIGHTDRESS

BANDS ON NIGHTGOWNS—NIGHTCAPS—NIGHT ATTIRE WORN IN THE STREET

Going to bed can hardly be called a ceremony; but the dress in which the bulk of humanity now sleeps can claim to be a special one. There are, of course, many people, who are not mere casual tramps, who sleep in their everyday clothes. Drovers who have to go to out-of-the-way places with cattle, where they can never be sure of getting a lodging, will sleep possibly after merely removing their outer coat, and it stands to reason that men engaged in this business can hardly be bothered to carry luggage with them. Any survivals that we may have to deal with in the case of our airiest dresses will not take us very far back into history, because our ancestors, from all accounts, went to an extreme which is the opposite to that which we have just been mentioning, and instead of keeping on all their clothes at night, they took them all off and put on no others. Mr. Calthrop graphically describes a scene which he supposes to be taking place in the reign of William Rufus. A lady is disturbed while getting ready for
bed by a cry of "sanctuary," and watches from her window until the fugitive is let into the church by the monks. In concluding his story, Mr. Calthrop says, "The night is cold. The lady pulls a curtain across the window, and then, stripping herself of her chemise, she gets into bed."

A man’s nightshirt is severe in cut like that which he wears in the day, and the sides are slit up in both garments as they are in the dalmatic and the tunics worn by the Anglo-Saxons, which were like a day shirt, longer behind than in front. A survival of the latter as an outer garment is to be seen in the short smocks worn by labourers who dig drains and do similar work. The lady’s nightgown may be elegantly ornamented with lace in the same way as are the linen garments which she wears in the daytime; but very often we find a large collar edged with lace, which recalls the falling band which we have had so often to mention. (See Figure 160.)

To a great extent sleeping suits of a coat and trousers, which are known by the name of pyjamas, have taken the place of the man’s nightshirt. These have the merit of making a man look more presentable if called up on an emergency. We shall see, if we contrast male and female fashions, that it has always been customary for the costume of women to follow that of men, though most ladies draw the line at adopting trousers. We have heard, however, of one young lady at least who does by night what she
will not do by day, for she has given up her night-
gown in favour of pyjamas.

Here and there we find that nightcaps are still worn. That belonging to an old lady, which we figure (see Figure 161), came from the village of

Bishopstone in Wiltshire, where no fewer than twelve old ladies, all of them over eighty, still wear such a head-dress at night. Nightcaps were worn by men in the time of the Tudors, and that of Queen Elizabeth, as is shown by the following extract from a bill of 1547: "Pd. for two nyght caps of vellvet for them, 8s. od." 47

They were very elaborately embroidered at this
time, and in Mary's reign were mentioned in a sump- 
tuary law. Old men still wear nightcaps, and the 
one we figure was used until lately at South Stoke in 
Oxfordshire. It is of the familiar style that we asso-
ciate with such a head-dress, and has a tassel on the 
top. (See Figure 162.)

FIG. 162.—A man's nightcap, from Oxfordshire.

In the time of Queen Anne ladies wore their night-
dresses, or night-rails as they were called, in the 
streets, and the fashion seems to have been in vogue 
at later times, though every means were taken to try 
and abolish it. It was not until a murderess was 
persuaded to appear at her execution in a bedgown 
that the fad was relinquished.