



Dress Design: Patterns of Various Reigns from Antique Costume (From Prehistoric to Nineteenth Century Victorian)

Talbot Hughes

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Dress Design Patterns of Various Reigns from Antique Costume From Prehistoric to Nineteenth Century Victorian The subject of Historical Costume covers such a multitude of detail that a volume on each century could be written, with hundreds of illustrations. Thus it is, most works on costume are expensive and bewildering; but I hope this small practical handbook will be a useful addition to the many beautifully illustrated works which already exist. I have divided the matter into centuries and reigns, as far as possible, in this small work, besides separating male and female attire, thus simplifying reference. A special feature has also been made, of supplying the maker or designer of dress with actual proportions and patterns, gleaned from antique dresses, as far back as they could be obtained; and I am much indebted to the authorities at the Victoria and Albert Museum for the permission given me to examine and measure their unique specimens. It has been my endeavour to arrange a greater variety of the forms which make up the characters of each period, and also to give a wider knowledge into the footwear, or details of the footwear, than is usual in most costume books. In a review of the styles I would not press any choice for building new designs, as I believe in close individual research and selection, which may utilise many interesting features from costume settings even in periods which are almost scorned. I believe the purest beauty is found in the simple forms of dress and decoration settings from the 12th to the 15th centuries, scribed to the natural proportions of the figure. The grace of line and movement is often aided by the short train, which can be so happily caught up in many ways; the slight drag of the train always keeps the front clear in outline, besides showing the movement of the limbs. Length of fall in the material was desired, the figure creating its own folds with every turn, but a belt was often placed rather high under the breast. There[36] is little reason with nature of fine form to make dress into sections by a corset waist. A long, lithe, complete curve in outline—much happier unbroken, except by the girdle—is certainly the most artistically useful conception, not breaking the rhythm (as does the harder belt), while it also induces much beauty in lifting and arranging the drapery. The long falling sleeve also has the same qualities, giving a greater fullness of shape, a variety of colour (by a difference of lining), with a winglike motion, besides softening the angle of the elbow.

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