



English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century: A Comprehensive Guide with 1,117 Illustrations (Dover Fashion and Costumes)

C. Willett Cunnington

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The nineteenth century was a period of continuous change for women's clothing in England. The growing prosperity of the merchant class meant an ever-larger number of women for whom "dress" was a principal function in life, while the increasing availability of lower-priced ready-made garments enabled women of moderate means to purchase the fashions of the day. In addition, the development of the railways spurred the spread of new goods, while the removal of the tax on papers in 1854 produced an abundance of fashion magazines at cheap prices, bringing news of the latest styles to the multitudes.

The magnificent array of ladies' fashions that characterized the century are on display in this remarkably complete decade-by-decade overview. Drawing almost exclusively on contemporary sources — fashion magazines, newspapers, rare period photographs, memoirs, Victorian novels, periodicals, and other publications, as well as firsthand observation of actual garments — the author describes and explains the couture that evolved in response to changing social conditions, technological innovations, and cultural developments.

Over 1,100 line and tone drawings and photographs depict hundreds of outfits ranging from lovely morning dresses and starkly attractive riding outfits to elegant carriage costumes, opulent evening dresses, and exquisite bridal gowns. Full-page plates also depict period millinery, footwear, underclothing, and other apparel, while three useful glossaries provide descriptions of materials, definitions of technical terms, and more.

Museum curators, vintage clothes collectors, and fashion historians will find this carefully researched and well-written book an indispensable tool for dating, identifying, and authenticating vintage clothing. Not only are styles described and illustrated in detail for each year; all the small details of construction by which specimens can be dated are given wherever possible. Moreover, designers, illustrators, and fashion enthusiasts will be delighted by the superbly detailed illustrations, which painstakingly document the fashionable finery of the Victorian era.

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