

THE GLOVE IN DAYS OF YORE.

If the science of knowing people by their clothes, whose claims are so eloquently urged by Balzac, ever come to be formulated, the chapter on the meaning of the glove will not be the least interesting portion of it. There is no article of clothing more diversified in its uses. Its apparent triviality disarms us, and we are inclined to toy with it lightly as one of the most agreeable ebullitions of feminine fancy and forget that anything more serious than adornment ever caused its use. Jean Godard, a French rhymester of the sixteenth century, wrote a poem, in which he told how Venus, running the Adonis, pricked her finger and ordered her maidens to get leather and make some gloves for her to protect her hands. But M. Godard's pretty fancy must give way before stern facts. The primary uses of the glove were strictly practical and unromantic.

English dames of early days never dreamed of such subtleties as gloves. They wore their sleeves long, with pointed flaps, that rested on the backs of their hands, or, when they went forth in winter, drew the loose drapery of their outer garment over their hands. It was not till near the close of the tenth century that they thought of gloves; then they wore them with only a thumb and no fingers, like the mittens of the present day, and they were wondrously embroidered and starred with jewels. No gloves were finer than those of the clergy. They were mostly of white silk, or linen cunningly embroidered, and sometimes fringed with pearls.

Later on, gloves became magnificent for common wear, and in contemporary pictures the nobility seemed to have carried them rather in their hands or in their girdles than on their fingers. It was by the fine gloves his page carried in his girdle that Coeur de Lion was betrayed on his way home from the crusade, and so fell into captivity.

But already the glove was more than a mere bit of foppery. The knight's mailed glove sheltered his hand. It became a sign of power, and when a gracious lord meant to signify his attention to protect a town he sent his glove as a sign of his willingness. The glove, too, was the token of defiance when one knight declared war against each other, and at the same time, as if to mark the difference between the strong right hand of man and the daintier hand of woman, he bound his mistress' delicate brodered glove to his helmet by way of showing his fealty. As the sign and test of love, gloves had been largely utilized.

By the sixteenth century gloves were common wear, together with farthingales, corsets and low gowns. Gloves were perfumed greatly. Autolycus sold the maids "gloves as sweet as damask roses." In Charles II's time the shortening of the sleeves led to the lengthening of gloves.

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