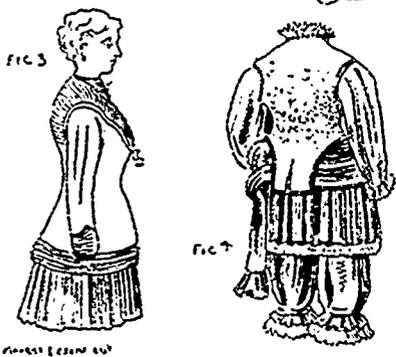


SKETCHES OF RATIONAL
DRESS



not to let it rest on the hips. A working-woman's costume of grey linsey, a combination vest and trousers with a loose tunic over, seems well suited for women engaged in factory work. One of these costumes is described as consisting of a stocking suspender, a combined suit of thin flannel, worn next the skin, with, for winter wear, a high-necked, sleeved suit of thick flannel, and for summer a low-necked, short-sleeved suit of calico; a skirt, with shaped band, buttoned on the outer combined suit, of bats'-wings, felt or alpaca, and relieved by long kilts at the bottom. The figure is well sustained by a short of crinolette. There are other models: one with a loose serge jacket, vest, and pegtop trousers and cloth gaiters; and another, exhibited by Mrs. Boecklin, of the United States, a kind of short paletot, with long vest and pegtop trousers. Both these are without skirts, and have been adopted by ladies in the

United States for some time. A light serge boating dress, with long continuations, is a sensible costume for ladies who are fond of rowing. Our notice of the exhibition would be incomplete were we to omit to mention one or two very attractive evening costumes, one of which we illustrate (Fig. 8). It is exhibited by Madame Worth and Co., a Parisian modiste, and shows a figure of a lady in a light dress of blue surate, large, loose, Albanian sleeves, freely suspended from the shoulders. The skirt is short, and, with the trousers, is hung from the waist. There is an elegance in the lines of draperies, which, however, may be deemed rather full, and the long, flowing character of the bodice is quite out of scale with the short frilled skirts. A dancing costume of blue satin and silk, trimmed with lace, waistcoat and jacket-body, is certainly an improvement on the dresses often worn at balls; and so is Madame Grace and Co.'s trouserless costume, though it departs little from the modern style.

It is rather too soon to offer any very decided opinions upon the merits of the new dress. Public taste and criticism are invited by Mrs. King and her colleagues; but we think there can be but one general opinion that the "divided skirt" or trouser costume, as we are here confronted with it, is not that best fitted for the female form. Even Mrs. King herself, in her lecture on "Dress" which we reported, has doubts in her own mind as to the propriety of the trouser as a proper covering, for she is willing to allow that it is not a very beautiful garment. To our mind, it is far less graceful than the knickerbocker. To see two frilled trouser legs appearing just above the boot, and a few inches below the skirt, as in one Manchester model, might suggest a man in a woman's skirt; but nothing can be uglier. The Bloomer costume, and many of the peasant costumes worn on the stage, would be far more artistic as models. Everyone will readily admit a shorter skirt than that usually worn is desirable and proper for ladies' walking dress, and for working and factory women and girls it is absolutely necessary. The hanging of graceful drapery about the waist without restraining or fatiguing the body is almost essential to a perfect costume for women. Few of the reformers have been very happy in their ideas. One of the most successful attempts by Messrs. Debenham and Freebody we have illustrated (Fig. 3). Here the navy blue close-fitting jersey conforms to without restricting the figure, and the skirt hangs in graceful folds. Mrs. Nettleship has also shown some good taste in her girl's dress, and for young girls the short skirt and simple gathered waist, with kilted terminations, are very becoming and exceedingly pleasing (Fig. 2). The smockfrock-like gatherings to the wrists and neck are very suitable, and give an elegance and finish. A portion of this work is drawn in detail.

The exhibition must, of course, be viewed as a transitory stage of the dress reform movement. Invitations are offered for designs for the dress of the future, for both gentlemen and ladies, upon the conditions laid down; though, as regards the last one, a greater departure from ordinary dress is permitted. It is remarkable so few have attempted anything in the reform of gentlemen's dress, and, to our thinking, it was chiefly in the dress of the male portion of society that an artistic reform was needed — *The Building News*.

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