



Shoes
in
VOGUE

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SINCE 1910

Christina Probert

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in
VOGUE

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VOGUE

SINCE 1910

by Christina Probert

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C.P.

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Cover. BV 1978 Albert Watson. *Manolo Blahnik* (left), *Ivory* (right). Back cover. FV 1923. *Hellstern*
Page 2. BV 1975 Keith Collie. *Russell & Bromley*

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Information is given in the following order: edition; year; artist or photographer; designer or maker (the last always in *italic*). Editions are identified by initials:

- AV American *Vogue*
- BV British *Vogue*
- FV French *Vogue*
- IV Italian *Vogue*
- GV German *Vogue*



INTRODUCTION

'Her feet beneath her petticoat
Like little mice, stole in and out
As if they feared the light.'

Sir John Suckling (1609–42).

True beauty traditionally requires tiny, delicately formed feet. Suckling's heroine had feet like 'little mice', while Cinderella's, the most famous of popular fable, were the tiniest in the land, her sable slipper so small it fitted no other girl. The bound feet and tiny shoes of Chinese women were as much a mark of class as of fashion or beauty. In eighteenth century England and France foot size was seen as a mark of social standing: portrait sitters were always given tiny feet, for large feet were a sign of low birth. During the early years of the twentieth century this idea gradually lost favour, and by 1930 society women were dashing down ski slopes, playing tennis, gardening, and wearing for all of these, wide soft footwear which allowed the feet to spread.

Fashion and etiquette have not always permitted exposure of the shoemakers' craft: for Suckling, in the seventeenth century, a fleeting glimpse of a foot was exciting. The fashions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made such a glimpse commonplace, but with Victoria's accession (her sartorial influence was international) came darkness for the feet, hidden under swathes of petticoat, crinoline, skirts until the twentieth century.

By 1880 women began to indicate that they were capable of more active occupations than those permitted by popular attitudes and restricting clothes. The 'Rational Dress' movement, for example, advocated styles based on considerations of 'health, comfort and beauty'. Such sentiments had become widespread by the early twentieth century. The Great War formalised the sea change taking place. Women wore practical clothes and shoes to do vital, practical jobs: those who drove ambulances for the first time, dressed wounds and clothed refugees, there could be no going back to a world where they were considered incapable of lifting a tea-tray. Women's suffrage movements were achieving their goal by 1920; women's athletics established themselves; women took full or part-time jobs: and all these new aspects of life naturally affected what women wore.

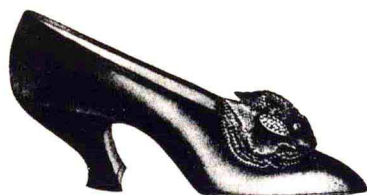
In 1910, walking boots were essential outdoor wear, winter and summer; shoes were high-cut, supportive, and only in the boudoir were hemlines ankle-length, shoes delicate and soft. Footwear fulfilled the same function for the feet that corsets did for the body: indeed restricting footwear and corsets ceased to be *de rigueur* simultaneously in the early 1920's as a result of

Cinderella's 'glass' slipper recreated as 1973 fashion in Perspex and speckled leather, and painted for British *Vogue*. By 1973 Michael English. *Richard Smith*

1910



'La chaussure de Cendrillon': Cinderella's shoe in the current mode. FV 1919
George Barbier



The Louis heel:
high cut evening
shoe with beaded
tulle bow. AV 1911.
Frank Bros.



The draped,
bifurcated skirt,
considered
shockingly
revealing: the ankles
and shoes were on
show! AV 1911

women's new role. At the outset of the century weather, season, time of day, rather than personal choice, dictated the style and even colour of shoes. Interest in shoes tended thus to focus on good cut and high quality, which were far more keenly sought after than they are today. A Fifth Avenue shoe shop, for example, advertised some evening slippers in 1919 captioned: 'In these, as in our shoes for women and men, superiority is manifest. They have that indescribable touch of smartness that commends them to people who are particular.'

Editorial remarks on footwear were scarce in the first eighteen years of the century. An early shoe editorial which appeared in February 1911, entitled 'The well shod foot: Good style boots and slippers and some little accessories that save hosiery wear', was as matter-of-fact as a train timetable, and the advice included as constant. As *Vogue* was to remark in 1919: 'At the beginning of the War we were limited to the prescribed boot for walking . . . now our choice of shoes has become more unlimited than ever, and the subject of footwear fascinating enough to talk about at length.'

The ubiquitous Victorian buttoned or laced boots remained correct outdoor wear until 1920, when they were relegated to footwear for the elderly and infirm. By 1910, however, it became increasingly acceptable to wear lace-up shoes or 'ties' as an alternative to boots, now ankle-length, in fine weather. In winter, boots and shoes were made of leather and suede; later versions in toning shades of browns in addition to the plain brown and black worn throughout. In summer, white suede or buckskin, beige and mushroom suede leather were correct. Heels varied in height between 2 inches and 2½ inches and in shape from the Louis in 1900 to the Cuban. Louis heels, named after Louis XIV, were waisted all round, giving a splayed out effect at its base, the shape Cinderella's Ugly Sisters still often wear in English pantomime. The Cuban heel, shaped only at the back, reappeared spasmodically throughout the twentieth century.

For daytime in 1910 indoor shoes were pumps, again with little 2–2½-inch heels, made of glacé leather or kid, in black or tan and only lightly ornamented with self-coloured pom-poms or bows. By 1914, the variety of colours and fabrics had become much greater as the rules of etiquette softened: decoration became increasingly important, varying from season to season.

Evening and boudoir shoes were always the least closely regimented and thus their styling was the most open to interpretation. Bedroom slippers in 1910 were flat or Louis-heeled, of suede, kid, velvet, lace, satin or brocade, ornamented with bows, ties, frills, buckles, pom-poms and ribbons. Drawings of exotic and fashionable bedroom slippers in early July 1919 were captioned by *Vogue*: 'The world is proved an ensnaring place when slippers and mules for slender bare feet droop their delicate frills or flaunt their bright ribbons with unmistakeable coquetry.'

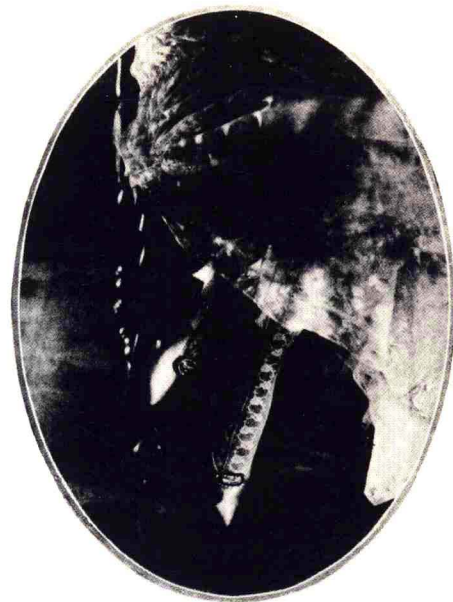
High cut evening shoes, a necessity in 1900, were worn until the second decade of the century, when strapped and laced versions became alternatives. These were much less highly cut over the instep, thus giving greater flexibility for dancing. By 1911 an editorial admitted that 'one is granted great leeway in these shoes' and illustrated a pair of high-cut black satin shoes with a butterfly bow of beaded black tulle. Whether of kid, velvet or suede, black evening shoes were correct wear until after the Great War, illustrated in *Vogue* in fashion sittings and photographic portraits. Even during the war greater leeway was allowed in styles, and coloured evening shoes appeared, dyed to match a ball dress, for example. Skirts shortened at the end of the war and there was a sudden surge of interest in what was on the feet. In 1919, Baron De Meyer, then under contract to *Vogue*, photographed walking, house, wedding and evening shoes for *Vogue*'s first sizeable photographic shoe article 'New shoes for Cinderella'.

Shoe decoration was particularly interesting in this early period. The earliest types were bows and pom-pons of satin or tulle or even of kid, sometimes beaded or ornamented with silver tissue (fine silvery chiffon). Most ornamentation was focused on evening and bedroom shoes and mules, but some walking and house shoes were also buckled and laced, even in 1910. The shape of buckle which first became fashionable was large and square; it gradually became smaller and, later still, round, oval, butterfly or bow-shaped. Early versions were made of burnished steel, later of paste, faceted cut steel or steel set with seed pearls. By 1920 feathers, rosettes, fur, velvet ribbons, lace and embroidery were all being used to decorate shoes that now 'deliberately ask attention'.

Legs, too, had become more brightly clad: silk stockings were finer, colours more varied and the necessary seaming transmuted into decorative patterns. Lisle stockings were worn throughout both decades for active sports, walking and general daytime wear. Although coarser and less fitting than their silk counterparts, they were far less expensive and harder wearing.

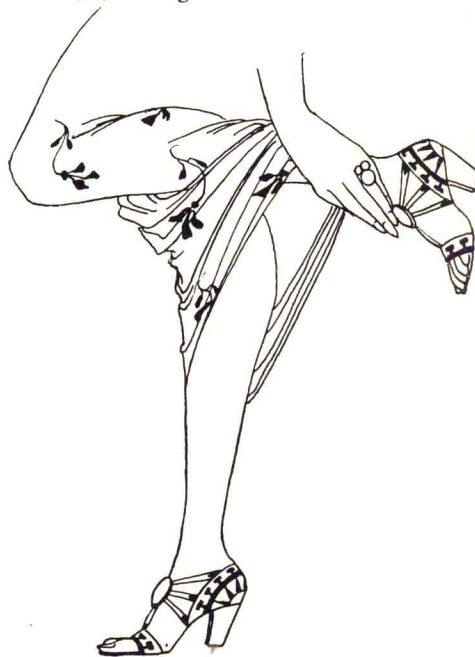
'A woman has a natural weakness where hosiery is concerned. Silk stockings are certainly seductive and cannot be withstood', said *Vogue* in 1911, and proceeded to list a variety of types of silk stocking; ribbed, plain-knit, two-tone and cotton-footed, calculated to ensure that the weakness would not be withstood. In 1919, Chantilly lace inserts in white silk stockings were particularly fashionable for evening; embroidered inserts were unusual for daytime wear.

By 1920, shoes had become a fashion accessory as important as a hat had always been, or gloves, or a handbag. Indeed, now that shoes were so attractive, so bright and so much on display, one had to be 'more careful than ever to place one's feet prettily, for the most charming footgear in the world will not better an unattractive walk'.

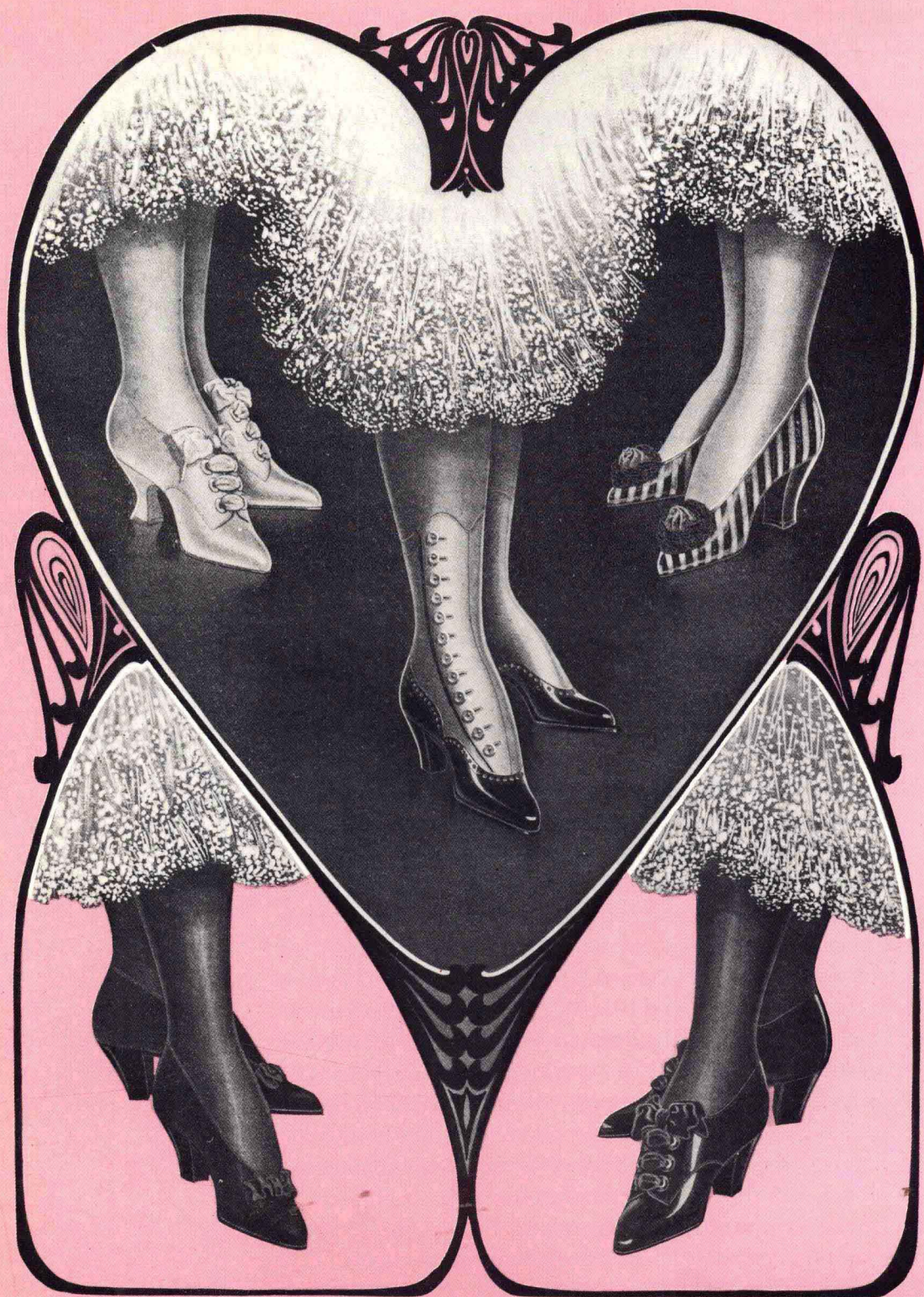


White lace stockings for the newly visible ankles. B.V. 1919 De Meyer

Pyrographed shoes 'for the boudoir of the deliciously impractical Parisienne'. B.V. 1919 George Barbier



1920



AV 1909

Swan & Edgar

The Leading West End Drapers.

Ltd.

REGENT STREET and PICCADILLY W 1



No. 117. All Black Suede
48/9



No. 114. Rose or Dark Quilted Satin
21/9



No. 113. Navy or Tan Glaze Kid
45/9



No. 115. Black Velvet, ditto
Quilted Satin
16/9



No. 142. Ladies' Service
Boot, Tan Calf
35/9



No. 116. Silk Slipper
2/11



No. 131. Coloured Brocade,
also Black
42/9



No. 130. Black Glaze Kid, Patent Cap
35/9



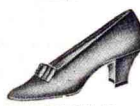
No. 109. Black or Tan Calf
45/9



No. 106. Black Velvet, also Satin
48/9



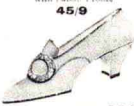
No. 119. Black Suede Cloth
with Patent Laces
45/9



No. 120. Suede Cloth, Grey,
also Navy
21/9



No. 125. The "Handy"
Foot's Leather
10/d.



No. 118. Grey Suede
25/9

BV 1918. Swan & Edgar

The first editorial shoe pictures to appear on *Vogue's* pages, *opposite*. Interest in shoe design and colouring increased as hemlines shortened: decorative stockings like these *on the right* emphasized this newly visible zone. By 1910 the new Cuban heel was used for walking and some evening styles, *opposite below left and right*; but for evening and boudoir shoes, like the lace-up and stripy versions *above*, the Louis heel remained the most popular almost until 1920. Swan & Edgar's advertisement of 1918 shows how little the shape of shoes had changed since 1910; what had changed was their fabric and finish: buckles and bows, new details each season – brocade, quilted satin, velvets used for late day and evening shoes, suedes, silk, glacé and plain leathers too.



"Onyx"

Hosi

For Sale at the Best
Dealers' Everywhere

Lord & Taylor

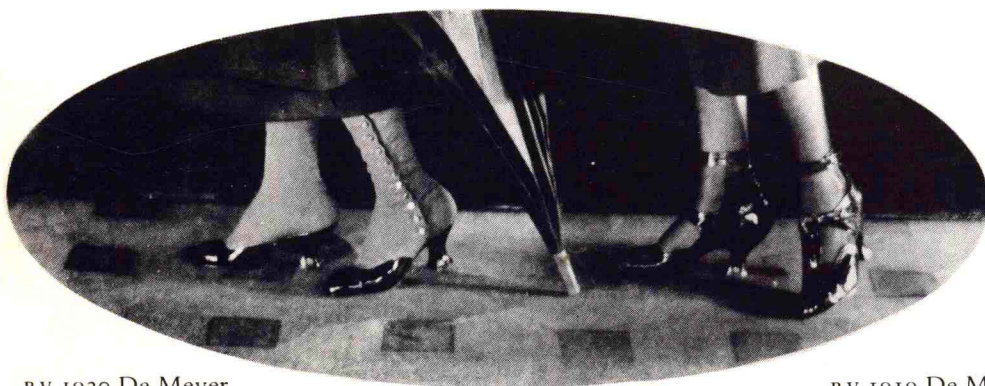
Wholesale Distributors
New York

AV 1910 Transatlantic Company



BV 1920 De Meyer

An expanse of leg clad in newly sheer silk stockings on show as hemlines rise towards 1920. There had for some years been dispute between Parisiennes and Englishwomen over the rectitude of the English last, long and narrow with a pointed toe, or the French last, wider and less pointed. The shoes *above* and boots and sandals *below* show the *Entente* reached by 1920: a more rounded toe, width of shoe midway between the traditional English and French lasts, heels the international Louis shape. More instantly recognizable changes were taking place too – the shoes *opposite*, of flesh-coloured satin with satin fans behind tiny buckles, were high fashion in 1919. Only a year later appeared the black velvet slippers *above*, appliquéd with geometric designs in white grosgrain ribbon, an early indication of fashion's new mood in the twenties.



BV 1920 De Meyer



BV 1919 De Meyer

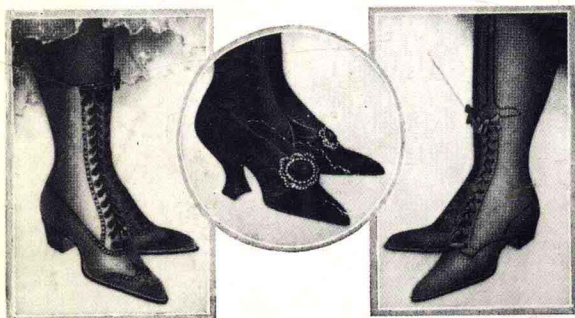




BV 1918



AV 1913



AV 1911

The whole range of garb for the well-shod foot, 1911-19. *Left* are two pairs of boots: punched leather pointed and laced boots for walking and a higher cut, simpler version for riding. Simplest of all, *above right*, polo boots of firm leather, similar to the cavalry boots in the adjoining picture. Discretion characterized fashionable footwear: the lady, *above*, in afternoon dress, wears simple pointed pumps, the uppers subtly decorated, and the evening slippers, *left*, are of dark velvet with a 'fancy buckle'. Boudoir shoes are the exception: multi-coloured laces, velvets, silks were used, and the languid lady *opposite* wears green slippers, with little white pompons.





Shoes in the spotlights, *opposite*. Jane Renouardt, *far right*, in *Moune* at the Variétés in Paris, wears a Callot gown in cream tulle, silver embroidered lace and gold tissue. Her shoes of cream satin have Louis heels, pointed toes, small buckles. The Louis heel ruled the New York stage too: the heroine of *The Lasso* wears similar shoes, *right*, laced around the ankle, with her Lucile dress of Valenciennes lace and hydrangea chiffon. Norma Talmadge's, *opposite below left*, are a more pointed version worn with a 'costume as clever as her acting'. Out on the street, however, boots are still fashionable: these black patent and grey kid boots, *this page*, which button at the side are still correct wear, particularly in inclement weather.