

Summary

Fashionable, dandy, man of fashion.

Men's fashion of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century from the collection of the University of Warsaw Library.

Fashion is a mirror of the surrounding world, showing people's needs and whims; it is a complex issue of sociology, marketing, and art. Fashion is usually associated with women, and we are all familiar with many styles of crinolines, bustiers, laces, flounces or embroidery. The women of the 19th century wore all of those rich costumes in order to draw admiration or incite jealousy in rival women, or to spark the interest of men.

But do we know as much about men's clothes from the past? It is the high time we showed how men's fashion developed and changed during the 19th century; the many different types of men's clothes that were in style; what was necessary to complement a man's image; where and by whom the fashion was created. Answers to these questions can be found in journals and magazines of that time.

The University of Warsaw Library possesses a vast collection of Polish and foreign press which opens a fascinating world of the

19th century reality. The book is based mostly on that source material. Pictures are taken from Polish and foreign (e.g. French, Russian) journals. Texts come from Polish magazines only, in order to show the 19th century Polish language and the reality of that time.

A part presenting types of men's clothes is organized dictionary-style – in alphabetical order from „A” – „algierka” – kind of a short coat, through more widely known clothes types as „frak” – a tailcoat, „surdut” – a frockcoat or „szlafrok” – a dressing gown, to letter „Ż” – „żakietka” – a jacket.

The oldest picture comes from 1803 and it indicates the beginning of the history of men's fashion in the book. Surprisingly, at the beginning of the 19th century, London was the capital of men's fashion in Europe; by the end of the 18th century, a phenomenon called „Anglo-mania” occurred. English habits, customs and fashion were imitated in European countries, even in France. It inspired the design of a stylish men's suit based on an English riding habit, consisting of a tailcoat, a waistcoat, and short, tight trousers.

At the beginning of the 19th century (Napoleonic wars, Restoration) men's clothes still resembled those from the end of the previous century: bi-corner hats, culottes, rich colours and decoration of clothes. Gradually, in accordance with changing life circumstances, customs, and economic development, men's clothes became more and more standardized in form, with dark colors predominating. In particular, the style of clothing mirrored the current ways of life – clothes became looser and more comfortable. At the beginning of the 20th century several styles of men's clothes (American, English and French) were shown in „Gazeta Krawiecka” („The Tailor's Magazine”). It was also possible to buy ready-made clothes in shops selling products imported from France, or copied from French styles. The names of famous tailors (French – Humann, Eppenttter, Bernard and Polish – Tomasz Kulczycki) and popular clothing shops were used in advertisements published in journals and magazines of that time. A fashionable man was obliged to present himself in his new clothes at a „Fashion Salon”. In Paris one such very well-known place was Longchamps, in London – Hyde Park, and in Warsaw – Bielany, Saski Garden or Krasiński Garden. It was a must for a man to show himself, but it was also a magnificent opportunity to observe the latest fashion trends. A fashionable man had to follow all changes in clothing styles, as well as in coiffure and in anything concerning fashion accessories. The etiquette of that time was very complex. Journals and magazines helped follow fashion trends by giving descriptions of currently obligatory widths of lapels, numbers of buttons, colours, shapes of collars and ties, studs and cuff-links jewels.

In the 19th century there were also strict regulations for children's dress. Generally speaking, boys up to 5 or 6 years of age were dressed like girls, in dresses (in pictures boys very often can be recognized only by their toys, e.g. a wooden horse). Older boys resembled adult men wearing similar suits and silk hats.

Men's fashion presented in Polish, Russian or French journals was very similar. It was of a cosmopolitan character, with types of clothes imported mostly from Paris and London. In Poland foreign fashion was accepted and imitated, usually by the courtiers. It was also popular among aristocracy and young men studying abroad. But the 19th century was the time of Polish fight for freedom and independence, and was the reason why Polish national dress was reactivated. „Żupan” was regarded as a Polish national dress from the mid-16th century. It was a long shirt worn, since the 1640s, with a robe („kontusz”) having slit-sleeves („wyloty”) thrown to the back. It was a dress typical for Polish nobleman of the 17th century. Later it became a sign, a symbol of patriotism, a national costume worn during national or family ceremonies (weddings, funerals) until the time that Poland regained independence, when the need to emphasize the separate character of the nation started to decline.

The book covers men's fashion comprehensively, giving historical descriptions and showing styles of men's clothes and accessories, fashion trends of the time, clothes for boys, men's tailoring and marketing of men's clothes, as well as the question of Polish national dress. It contains also a chronicle of the year 1845 taken from „Dziennik Mód Paryskich” („Journal of French Fashion”). A dictionary of fabrics and techniques of decoration used in the 19th century closes the study.