

How the Prize Beauty's Bob Upset All Paris

Hailed First as a Model of Girlish Sweetness She Started a War That's Still Raging When She Blossomed Out in Boy's Clothes a la Garconne.



Genevieve Felix, the Prize Beauty, Photographed in the Mannish Attire That So Outraged the Sensibilities of Her Former Admirers.

By WINIFRED VAN DUZER.
FROM the very moment that Mlle. Genevieve Felix smiled from paintings, movie films and the stage, upon Paris, all of France sighed with delight and claimed her for its sweetheart.

"In all our traditions of lovely women," wrote the famous essayist, Marcel Bias, "there never has been one so lovely! Why? Perhaps because she is so gorgeously feminine!"

"To-day when women not only desire men's political and professional prerogatives but also are attempting to steal their dress and manners, small Genevieve is the little lady of our dreams. 'She touches our hearts because she is just a sweet little girl.'"

Other critics spoke of Genevieve's youth. Was she seventeen or sixteen and a half? And, oh, such innocence. She was like a baby wondering at the world, with big, gray eyes peering through the longest lashes one had ever seen.

Such grace of figure, and yet such girlishness. And her manner! Always that of a child who adored everybody.

But, after all, her hair best expressed her personality, served her admirers. It was the color of sun on bright gold and hung in ringlets quite to her waist. It was old-fashioned hair and suggested old-time ideals of girlhood. When she appeared in her fluffy skirts and her big, floppy hats and little, low-heeled slippers, they said that she epitomized French femininity.

"Soon she will influence all the young women of France to become sweet little girls instead of the pert, lawless and boyish young persons many of them are trying to be," predicted one writer.

And it looked as if the prophecy would work out. For Genevieve was becoming a cult in France. Girls were beginning to wear the simple, fluffy dresses that she wore.

The "Felix hat," with its wide, floppy brim trimmed with flowers, was the rage. Manners were being toned down and becoming dignified. Indeed, a set of "fanny flappers" sprang up in Paris, whose enthusiasm for their idol outdid the adoration once lavished by their American cousins, the "Jerry flappers," upon Gertrude Farrar.

And everywhere they talked about the curious set of circumstances by which Mlle. Felix emerged from obscurity to become the darling of Paris almost overnight.

There had been a beauty contest held by artists ambitious to do "girl" portraits for the Salon. Models, actresses, society misses—all women with any claim to pulchritude sent their photographs to a committee and one was selected to pose as a model for the painting.

Genevieve's likeness found its way to the contest and the little unknown was chosen over hundreds of beauties, many of them famous. Later, when the portrait was being acclaimed by the public, she was called "La Muse de Montmartre" and theatre and movie stars with each other in making her tempting offers.

Of course she was bewildered by it all. Nevertheless she appeared in one or two vaudeville sketches and became more popular than ever. She was featured in a film play and Paris began to call her "sweetheart." Not in many years had any woman been so universally admired and beloved.

And then something terrible happened. Mlle. Genevieve Felix bobbed her hair.

Not only did she bob her hair, but she sheared the golden ringlets close to her head. And when

she had finished she looked for all the world like a boy, for she had a regular man's hair-cut!

When Paris heard about the bob it was explained that in petite Genevieve was merely preparing to play a dual role in a film drama, one of her parts being that of a boy. Nevertheless the city was shocked as it has been but few times in its history.

Not the most risqué of all the productions in the theatres nor even the undraped beauties of the Folies Bergeres had given the French capital such a turn as the city experienced when it saw Genevieve with her hair bobbed and wearing mannish clothes.

"Our sweet little girl is gone!" mourned Paris. "To think that she should disappoint us so! This bizarre young person who has taken her place is not our sweetheart. We have been betrayed!"

A newspaper printed a long article deploring Mlle. Felix's bob on the ground that as the idol of France, she was setting the girls a bad example.

The French people long have been alarmed by a trend toward the masculine among the women. Out of the chaos left by the war there grew a liking for mannish costumes, mannerisms and get-up generally that has threatened to transform French



Mlle. Diana, the French Actress, Wearing the Costume That Caused Her Arrest in Versailles Garden. But the French Court Approved the Costume as "Merely Frivolous" and Ordered Her Release.

of "La Garconne," there was a terrific row. Everybody made public statements. The majority deplored what had happened, though there were a few who upheld Genevieve's bob.

Mme. Francine, the spectacular star of the Folies Bergeres, who appears before the public every night in a sash of pink tulle, was one who bitterly arraigned the little prize beauty.

"It is shocking!" she stated. "Stealing men's clothes and make-up by our women is getting to be a positive menace. And by Genevieve, the most ingenue ideal in France!"

"Of course I have been criticized. They say I am immodest. But I challenge anyone to find the least thing unfeminine in my appearance. No matter

women, always the most feminine to be found anywhere, into hybrid creatures.

The tendency has been lampooned by the press, caricatured, lectured against and fought by everybody except the women themselves. When Victor Marguerite wrote his sensational novel, "La Garconne," around a bachelor girl of the type, he was so severely criticized that his name was dropped from the rolls of the Legion of Honor.

Accordingly when Paris's "sweet little girl" appeared like a living impersonation



An Example of the Way the French Press Is Lampooning the Tendency of its Women to Wear Mannish Clothes. This Cartoon Is from "La Vie Parisienne."

how undraped a woman may be she will be respected if she remains completely feminine. It is aping masculinity that degrades our womanhood.

And Francine's contention seemed to be supported by a ruling of the Paris court which upheld the beautiful Mlles. Diana and Maryl of the Casino de Paris when they posed in scanty costumes for the movies in the gardens of Versailles.

When the actresses were brought before the judge it was testified that what they wore on the terraces of Versailles were feather head-dresses, chiefly, but such was the garb in which they nightly entertained audiences at the theatre. And while it was not protective it was as unmasculine as dress could be.

"I find nothing wrong," said the judge. "If the costumes are suitable for the stage they may be worn on the street as well!"

And of course there was the published statement of Mlle. Helene Ducharme, the artist, who said it was nobody's business if girls wanted to bob their hair and wear four-in-hand ties.

"It's just that men don't like us to be independent," she declared. "And our emancipation from frills and long hair constantly reminds them that we no longer have to ask their permission for everything."

"They want us to marry and give up our lives to having children and keeping homes for them instead of enjoying careers and being individuals. They are trying to frighten us back into old-fashioned obscurity."

Genevieve, however, refused to endorse this statement. With trembling lips and big eyes swimming she begged everybody to forgive her. "I just didn't understand," she sobbed. "You see, they told me I'd have to cut my hair and wear the ugly, tailored things for awhile so I'd feel natural in them when I act for a film. I'm so sorry! And I'll make my hair grow again just as fast as I can—truly I will!"

And this heart-broken little plea, of course, set her right with Paris once more. Everybody wiped their eyes and declared that "la pauvre petite" had been deceived and that she was still their sweetheart and always would be.

But Genevieve's bob had given the excitement over the tendency of French women to be mannish such impetus that it could not be quelled. Even the facile pen of Marcel Bias has become somewhat hysterical especially since he is determined to save the "sweet little girl" of many of his writings from the result of her mistake.

"One sits in the theatre," writes Bias, "and regards the heads before him, musing upon the sameness of all—men's and women's alike. There is but this difference; the masculine coiffure is so as custom dictated, while the feminine is an affectation—casting off of woman's greatest charm, her crown of glory—and therefore odious."

Bias' attack upon "feminine modernism" has further so incited the French people that now everybody is wondering if short hair Genevieve can become "the sweet little girl" again soon enough to help recapture femininity for women.

Paris Audiences Applauded the Strictly Feminine Appeal of Tamara Swirskaya's Stage Dress.