

# THE DRESSMAKING ART

PRACTICAL LESSONS IN HOW TO CUT AND FIT COWNS.

THE SECOND OF A SERIES OF INSTRUCTIVE ARTICLES ON DRESSMAKING.

## SKIRTS.



This instruction in dressmaking is intended for the novice, our first advice is, learn to sew. If possible the student in dressmaking should give her services in a workshop for a week or a month. One week would be invaluable to an intelligent young woman, and in that time she could acquire a practical knowledge of the art not to be obtained in a year's reading.

In the supposition of rudimentary knowledge the necessity for a sewing-room is as imperative for the success of the dressmaker as a kitchen for the cook or a studio for an artist. You want a machine oiled, cleaned and in good order; a table or cutting-board, at least 5 feet long and 3 feet wide; a pair of shears designed for cutting purposes; an inch-measure; a wire figure; a mirror; a foot-rest; a press-board, such as tailors use for pressing pantaloons; a flat iron and some means of heating it and good light. The best mirror is an easel glass. A cheaper article is the purchase of a German plate, four or five feet by eighteen or twenty inches, framed in an inch of oak and hung resting on the floor. If your means will not allow this, take any ordinary looking-glass and stand it up on the floor so as to satisfy yourself in regard to the hang of the skirt and the general effect of the trimming. You know better than anybody else what you want, and as you are going to wear the garment it should be in harmony with yourself. The gown and the wearer at odds means discord. Suitable is beautiful, and unless you are pleased you cannot lend to it the life and influence of your personality, which we call taste.

A wire figure is very useful, as the frame can be adjusted to any hip measurement and the drapery applied without the perplexing and harassing inconvenience of putting on and taking off the dress during the process of construction. Except for gathering, the short needles known in trade as between are better than sharps. Tailors never use anything else; they also prefer the open thimble; they use short lengths of thread; they are careful to baste everything and pin nothing; no seam ever goes unpressed, and being the best and neatest sewers in the world their methods are worthy of imitation.

Don't try to work with crumpled material. Get an iron and press out the lining or dress goods; if the latter, have a cloth under the iron to avoid gloss.

And now to make a skirt, which, by the way, is a composite affair, consisting of the foundation, the little skirt and the drapery.



SHOWING SKIRT FOUNDATION WITH SLASHED HEM.

Here are the dimensions of a fashionable skirt by which any one can cut it.

Entire width, round the bottom, 84 inches; length of front and side gores, 42 inches; length of back gore, 43 inches.

Lay the French cambric on the table double, and with tape measure and chalk mark off the front gore 8 inches at the top and 10 at the bottom. The first gore should be 8 inches wide at the top and 11 at the bottom; the second set 6 inches above and 9 below, and the back a straight breadth 43 inches long and 24 wide.

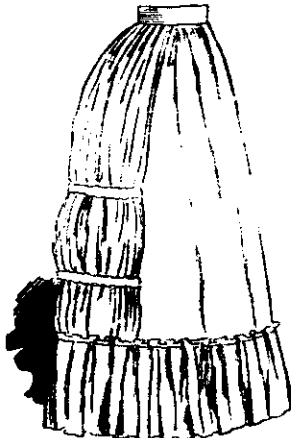
Don't tear any kind of cloth. Use a measure and tailor's chalk and cut in the chalk-line. Don't be afraid to baste; it will save the novice a world of trouble. Never try to cut or baste in your lap. It is the laggard's method. Spread the cloth on the table, use weights if necessary to hold it in place and work like a draughtsman or a merchant tailor. A rocking-chair is out of place in a sewing-room. If you must rock it will be better to lay aside the sewing. It is to this rocking-chair, lap-cutting system employed by so many domestic seamstresses that sweet tempers and pretty toilets are sacrificed. Too much cannot be said on the subject of

neatness. Have the machine clean; begin to stitch up the seams at the bottom; tie the threads if there is danger of ripping and cut off all ends. Double-stitch the seams for strength as well as neatness. Have a care about basting the work; don't stretch bias edges and never sew with the cloth wrapped about the forefinger, a habit contracted in doll-draps which some sewers never outgrow.

When the seams are stitched put on the casings, which should be made of cambric, for the reel and draw-string. Have the strips one inch wide and thirty inches long to cover the whole back breadth and half the side gore; if more of the skirt is gathered it will be too tight for ease in walking. The first casing is for the elastic and should be placed thirteen inches from the top; the second, for the extender, place eight inches below the first. Many dressmakers omit the reel, running both casings with rubber, but if the material has weight and the dress is intended for the street the steel is desirable, as it holds the skirt out from the feet.

A thirteen-inch steel is hardly perceptible and the graceful effect produced is not easily obtained in any other way. Use tape at the ends of both casings to tie or draw back the gathers.

The pocket in and the slit faced in the back, cut a piece of cross-bar crinoline six inches wide and baste round the inside of the skirt; on this lay a piece of the good— the same width, turning the edge over the crinoline. In the



SKIRT AND LITTLE SKIRT.

right side baste another piece of the dress material the same width as the other. One row of stitching will suffice, and when finished you will have a very neatly faced skirt alike on both sides. If the material is cloth, heavy woollen or delicate silk, use cashmere or alpaca for the inside facing, but have it the same colour as the goods.

If the three applied pieces are well basted the edges will be even, but before putting on the braid lay the skirt on the table folded down the front gore so that the seams come together. Pare off the bottom edge straight and then put on the braid, beginning in the middle of the back. Before using dip it in cold water and dry it. This will prevent it from shrinking or drawing up on the skirt. Baste it round the facing one-eighth of an inch from the bottom and stretch in the basting thread. Unless the front of the skirt is slashed at the foot it will pull in walking. To get this spring or freedom two or three Ys are put in the front gore; if three, one in the centre and one at each end; if two, which for light-weight dresses are sufficient, have them over the feet, eight inches apart, and three inches high. Don't cut into the facing before stitching on the braid, for if you do you will have trouble, as the cloth will slip, and unless you are skilful the openings will be clumsily finished. Baste and stitch the braid on till you come to the front gore, and when within four inches of the middle run the binding up on a four-inch slant and down again to complete the A or angle.

Eight inches further along fashion another caret and don't cut the cloth away until you are ready to fell on the braid. The turn-over-round braid wears better than the flat arrangement. Use strong thread and a little wax to keep it from ripping.

The braid on the foundation, as shown in the first cut, is ready for the little-skirt, which is nothing more than a deep ruffle or plaiting put on to hide the lining in case the drapery flies up.

If the material is delicate and airy, make the little skirt knee deep; if of cashmere weight, an eight-inch ruffle, about forty inches wider than the skirt, will suffice. This short skirt, if made with a two-inch hem, stiffened with crinoline and finished with five or six rows of machine stitching, will form a pleasing and simple relief for the drapery. In the second cut the skirt is shown with the little skirt and the draw-strings ready for the drapery.

For the average woman a 42-inch skirt will allow a small hem at the top, although it is not advisable to have it more than half an inch. Too many gathers about the waist mar the fit of the basque.

In fitting the skirt about the hips the figure will suggest the width of the darts. Ordinarily the one in the front placed in the centre of the gore is three-quarters of an inch wide, narrowed to the depth of four inches. Stitch the side ones three inches from the first and the same depth to give the necessary spring over the hips. Three inches back lay three plaits, one inch wide, and gather the rest of the lining with two rows of shirring. Measure the band, allowing an inch at the ends to turn in for the hook and eye. Tack the centre of the skirt and belt together and sew by hand. Machine work, while stronger, is difficult to rip if alterations are needed. Clumsiness can and should be avoided. When finished press with a hot iron. The novice has presumably tried on the skirt and, satisfied it hangs well, is perfectly even and easy, the work of draping it can begin, and also the comforting thoughts that all is well.

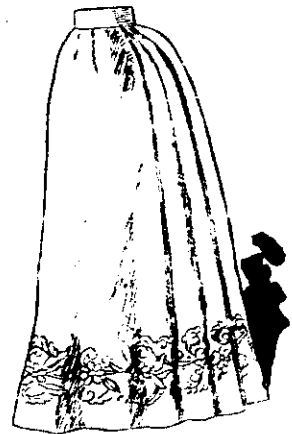
And now for the drapery. If the material is fifty-six inches wide four breadths will be needed. If cashmere is used five will be required, three in the back and one for the front. Cut them straight, the three back ones 46 inches long and the front 54 inches, which provides for some graceful arrangements about the sides. Stitch the goods, press the seams flat and turn up the bottom with a three-inch hem. This hem can be stiffened with crinoline and stitched in rows of plain or coloured silks or made up soft and felled. Gather the back into a six-inch thread, run a second thread three-quarters of an inch below the first and pin the drapery to the band of the skirt.

The drapery and skirt should be even at the bottom. Here and there place a pin to connect the two and draw the front up at the side in one or two plaits, or to both hips in some graceful gathers. If you have a wire figure this will be an easy matter. If you haven't that convenience stand in front of the glass and play with the pins and drapery until you get an arrangement sufficiently artistic to please your fancy. If you turn down half an inch at the belt and loop up the fulness at the side you will have a very tasteful effect. In stitching the drapery lay it on the band of the skirt and cover the sewing with a piece of gillnet or braid. So much for the construction of the skirt, which is the basis on which all dresses are designed. The rest is ornamental and must be an expression for the taste of the wearer. Innumerable avenues are open to the novice for ideas.

Fashion plates are inexpensive and so admirable in print and detail that each will be a suggestion as well as a model to the domestic modiste. Every shop of importance devotes one day in each season to an opening, to which the world is welcome and at liberty to plunder and borrow and appropriate ideas. It may interest the reader whose means are limited to know that the most ladylike costumes for the street are made after the manner described without a particle of decoration further than machine stitching.

While there is an indefinable charm about the garment, it belongs to the woman. It comes from her manner of walking, standing or wearing it. Therein is the success of the skirt. We are all conscious of our personal defects. If they cannot be corrected, at least let them be covered. If the posture is such that the stomach protrudes and the back hollows, conceal the fact by making the skirt several inches longer in front than in the back. Women with flat backs should never make the skirt round; allow for an incline fall at the back, and when the dress settles it will be straight. Students of physical culture and professional clothiers are well aware that people who walk on their heels measure less in the back than they do in front from the belt down.

Although very stylish just at present, plaids are more expensive and more difficult to make than plain goods or small figures. At the same time it is necessary to match the blocks, whether used on the straight or bias of the cloth. It is equally difficult to handle wide stripes and pronounced patterns, designs, by the way, intended only for tall, thin women.



DRAPED WALKING SKIRT.

Before leaving the subject the inexperienced dressmaker is warned against attempting too much. When you begin the skirt make it as well as you can and with all reasonable speed. Very often the work drags until the finish wears from the cloth and the pride of the owner gives place to dislike any discouragement. The task begun, complete it, but whatever the time consumed, attempt nothing else. It is easy to understand the difficulty of mastering a waist, but there should be no obstacles in the way of a skirtmaker.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

Two Parisian novelties for the benefit of the Orleanist ladies are called, respectively, the *Chapeau gamelle* and the *Flot Coussinet*. The bonnet suggests the shape of the soldier's provision-bowl, while the "flot" is a bunch of tricoloured streamers, which can be attached to the shoulder of a ball dress, or worn at the throat of a high bodice.

Beaded jackets (sleeveless) and beaded monays (a sort of cape of beads reaching to within four inches of the waist, and two or more on the shoulders) are much worn. They are made of jet, or crystal and pearl.

## LA GRIPPE.

'Give it not to me,' she said;  
'Would you see your darling dead?  
Leave the house then— vanish— skip!  
Ere I take from you the grippe.'  
Then her father, old and grim,  
Set the bull-dog on to him.  
Bull-dog snote him thigh and hip  
Even dogs can give the grippe.