

THE DRESSMAKING ART

PRACTICAL LESSONS IN HOW TO CUT AND FIT GOWNS.

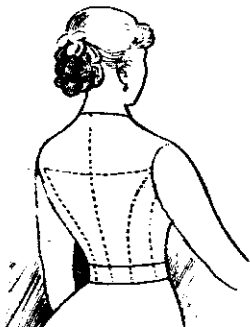
THE THIRD OF A SERIES OF INSTRUCTIVE ARTICLES ON DRESSMAKING.

BASQUES.



KNOWLEDGE comes from one of two sources—instruction or observation. Applied knowledge is talent. Dexterity is the result of imitation and a slight-of-hand obtained by practice. Familiar, practical knowledge united with dexterity produces skill, without which the dressmaker is handicapped. Unfortunately this important branch of industry is left to chance. Housewives and small girls learn to knit stockings, crochet lace and

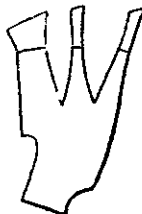
embroider table scarfs, but no study is given to the cutting or fitting of a dress waist. The cloth is cut by a flimsy tissue pattern or a ravelled, jagged lining and the fit is a venture, a risk, a hazardous undertaking, whereas it should be at the outset a conclusive certainty.



THE COMPLETED WAIST.

It is a common observation that there are no young seamstresses and no amiable home dressmakers. The premature age is not due so much to the occupation itself as to the worry caused by inefficiency. Ignorance is the bane of the sewing-room. The outcome is waste of material, loss of time and temper, and a violence to health more insidious than years of toil. There is nothing in the line of domestic science requiring more careful training than dressmaking, and nothing about which there is so much back work unless it is the raising of children. Considering the fact that women must have dresses all the time, the persistent ignorance regarding the theory and system by which they are designed is most remarkable. The fit or plan of a waist never changes.

The placing of darts, the setting of a collar or a sleeve, the handling of side-gores and fronts is exactly the same whether intended for the house, the street or the saddle. Women do not as a rule attach the same importance to fit that men do. Defects that are not readily corrected are passed over and an attempt is made to use trimming for the salvation of the costume. The result is shoddy's patch work. A change has come over the world of dress, however, and every day women are realizing the superiority of fit over fashion. Every fashionable dress does not fit, but every dress that fits the figure accurately is fashionable.



FRONT.

Although it is never too late to learn, it is difficult for the mother of a family to leave her home for the purpose of study. Help must come to her through her daughters, and any young girl of ordinary intelligence can readily master the rudiments of a system which will enable her later to become skilful. In a city like this ambition has every advantage. If some of the time women spend looking over styles and asking questions which make the life of the dressmaker hideous was devoted to perusing his methods, they might in a short time steal enough of his talent to serve a valuable purpose, and the same hint the struggling seamstress might appropriate with advantage.

Reduce to the task by necessity or preferring by choice to do her own sewing, the first requisite is a model. Let the novice go to a first-class dressmaker, be measured and fitted with a basque. As it is to serve a special purpose it will be well to let the artist find everything. Let him also understand that you will not accept the work unless it is superior in character and fit. Select a perfectly plain style, as simplicity is enduring. Have your wits about you and have a hand-glass, but hold your tongue. Your suggestions cannot be valuable and are sure to be impertinent. The operation finished, whether that of a first, second or third fit, it will be your privilege to criticise or comment. Have

what you want, but know what you want first. The waist done to your satisfaction will serve as a model to which you can refer for measurements, etc., in future work.

The dressmaker having drafted your garment from careful measurement, and remembering, too, the corrections that were necessary, is eminently able to cut you a pattern that will reduce the cost and trouble of making your next waist to a minimum.

Have him use thick paper, such as tailors employ; have it cut as once, and you proceed at once also to make use of it while your ideas are clear. Make a trial of the pattern in cheese-cloth or muslin, and ensure success before cutting good lining.

Again, there are plenty of specialists who will cut a lining to measure, indicate the seams, give it to the student customer to take home, cut the cloth by and baste up, then, by appointment he will fit the waist and sleeve and fit the collar on. With an understanding of sewing, the results are excellent. Incidentally this plan is successfully practiced by many seamstresses uncertain of their talent, and the well-to-do patrons whom employ them. A considerable business of this sort is done by teachers and instructors of various systems of dressmaking.

Mindful, however, that many sewers cannot afford to pursue this course, there remains the tissue paper and lining patterns to which the millions resort, but, unfortunately, with not the best results. When a woman buys a pattern the bust measure only is taken. Supposing it to be thirty-six inches, one buyer may be 6 feet tall, with a waist measure of 24 inches, and another 4½ feet tall, measuring 17½ about the waist, both require thirty-six inches across the bust and the question is, who will the pattern fit? Certainly not both. Probably neither.

There, you see, is the difficulty of handling badly-cut patterns. They are cut proportionally. Few women are so designed. It will be seen, then, that although the same pattern is used by these women the alterations must be entirely different. It is also well to impress upon the mind of the novice that unless she knows something about striking a mean average her chances of ruining the dress are very large.

While mathematically accurate the embryonic Worth is advised to let tissue paper patterns alone until greater practice has been secured. They are ugly things to handle, even when brand new, for they will curl up and creep away and nothing short of nailing or gluing will keep them down, and they must be kept down for that nice accuracy necessary to the art.

Better success will redound to the inexperienced waist hand who uses the cheap waist lining first. Although cut and drafted exactly like the tissue pattern, there is a saving of time and an invaluable economy of nerve and amiability. The lining is sold by the yard piece, on which is traced the entire waist. When cut out and the seam basted the skeleton of the basque is ready to try on. Whereas, with the flimsy paper an entire afternoon will be consumed by a painstaking seamstress in tracing and cutting the cambric. However, quite as many alterations may be needed on the lining to approximate the more careful fit that will follow when the cloth is cut.

Ordinarily a basque has two side bodies. If the figure is large with a waist measure of twenty-six inches or more, three side gores are used. These with the two backs and two fronts comprise the body of the garment. Find the way the grain of the cloth runs by brushing it and remember that unless cut with that grain your waist will never fit right. All the gores must be cut with the cloth and all are straight but the round side body, as indicated in the cut.

Given the cloth, a good silicia for the lining, a pair of sharp scissors and a table, the novice is ready to cut. That done, baste, using No. 60 cotton. Baste close and thick, baste on the table—never in your lap. Let the first basting run through the centre of the gore. Have the threads wound round the edge regular to be a guide in sewing and stitching the seams. Many women and among the number those who profess an understanding of the business, baste over their fingers. The result is a complete botch, for the top piece being shorter than the bottom, the garment becomes lop-sided. To repeat former advice, don't sew anything round the finger.

To join the different parts, begin with the backs. Every pattern is notched at the waist line, which must guide the seamstress. Begin at this line and baste up the backs. Commence again at the waist and baste down to the edge, keeping both ends and edges even. The round side body goes on next. Join it to the back at the waist line and baste up, holding the edges together until within three inches of the top, when by measuring you will find that the side is half an inch shorter than the back. Hold the back a little easy, to provide the necessary freedom for the shoulder blade, and stretch the side to make ends meet. Finish the seam below the waist line.

Join the straight side or under-arm gore to the round side above and below the waist line, keeping one side perfectly even with the other.

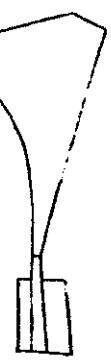
Now for the fronts which require the darts. Put a pin or tack at the waist line and baste down, gradually widening from the waist line down; the seam must be even.

The right hem of the front is basted over, allowing a quarter of an inch for bows and eyes or button-holes. The left edge is left flat or open to form a fly or facing under the button-holes.

To join the front and side body commence at the waist line and sew up, stretching the side seam a little if necessary to make ends meet and keeping the seams perfectly even below the waist. Join the other three gores to the back and then close the shoulder seams. The front or top of the shoulder is always shorter than at the back. This is necessary, as the back measurement is always greater than the chest or front. In sewing don't cut, but stretch the front and make it reach or take in the back, which will provide the needed fullness and make the waist fit smooth over the flat or hollow part of the shoulder. Try on the waist and see if there are any glaring faults. There is one sacred seam—that up the middle of the back—which must never be touched. If the waist is cut right it remains inviolate. Take in any other seam. If more room is wanted let out the seam under the arm, but never within on the round-side body.

If the back wrinkles between the shoulders, it is too long. Take it up on the shoulders. If it wrinkles at the waist, the lining is too short. Loosen it at the hem or bottom and allow it to run up. Wrinkles also come from the insufficiency of notches. Have plenty along the side seams at the belt line and cut them as near the stitching as possible without cutting the thread.

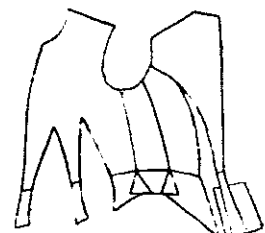
Few dresses are properly boned. Before using have the bones soaked in water a couple of hours. Whether you use galloon or hemmed muslin for the casing, stitch it on full enough to lie in gathers; the casings full and the bones tight will straighten the seams of any dress and defy waist wrinkles. Here is a scale for the correct placing of bones: The one up the back seam is not necessary. In the side seams let the bone run up four and a half inches above the waist line and two inches below; the bones under the arm must not come nearer than two inches of the sleeve.



BACK.



AROUND THE SIDE OF THE BODY.



HALF THE WAIST.



SIDE BODY.

In the darts have the bone end one inch below the casing. Run the bone to the bottom of the basque and tack it by sewing through at five different places above the waist line and two places below. Of these seven sewings have one half an inch on either side of the belt. At the top of the casings tack the bone in place, half an inch or so below, so as to prevent it breaking or pushing through. If properly soaked there will be no difficulty in sewing through the bone, and it is this sewing that will support the figure and sustain the shape of the bodice.

If books and eyes are used bone both front seams. Run a stitching along the under-arm, the width of the bone and insert the bone between the linings, having it as high as the darts and extending down to the bottom of the facing. As before stated, if properly cut, any waist will fit if abundantly and tightly boned. For the whalebone must be whole, to afford the pliability required, and securely held by strong sewing. Every waist should be provided with an inside belt, secured to each seam. This will hold the bodice in place and take the strain off the front piece.

Very often the shape and style is ruined in the alterations. In taking in a seam a sixteenth of an inch is frequently sufficient, whereas one-third is made and new troubles produced. It is imperative that care and patience be used to strike that nicey of correction that lies between perfection and ruin.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THERE is no use in pretending that the question of dress is a frivolous or an idle one, or that sensible women are above it, or that a woman who finds herself with 'nothing to wear,' and takes time and thought in providing herself with something, must needs be a Flora McFlinsey.

All women are not pretty, all are not graceful, or 'stylish,' or attractive, or imposing; but every woman has a best side, and it is her duty to know it and to make the most of it, and keep it on view instead of the worst side, which so many of the dear creatures seem determined to present.

Every woman, if she means to fill her own place in the world, is bound to make the most of herself, and to keep on doing it as long as she lives.

Some ladies are complaining that instead of becoming more sensible the costumes designed for feminine wear are more inconvenient than ever. It is now the correct thing to ruin the hems of street dresses by allowing them to drag on the pavement. It is a most expensive and disgusting style. The skirt attracts to itself all the mud, etc., every much etc., too frequently, it can find on the foot path, and carries it into the dwelling-house of the wearer or of her friends. The carpet in the drawing room acts as a brush, and relieves the dress of part of its filth. No wonder gentlemen call ladies insane in their craze for being in the fashion, cost what it may.