

FASHIONS OF THE POST-WAR TWENTIES AS AN EXPRESSION
OF THAT PERIOD

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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of modern feminine dress, which corresponds closely to the emancipation of women at the beginning of the twentieth century, provides one of the most fascinating pages in the history of modern civilization.

The purpose of this study is to show the relationship between the ideals, events, and thoughts of the period and the costume worn by women in the post-war twenties. To this end, the author has considered (1) some of the social, political, and economic events of this period and the years immediately preceding it, and (2) the fashions of women from 1910 to 1930.

Since there seems to be a significant relationship between the extremely unfeminine silhouette of the 1920's, and the fact that the women of America, who dictated this mode, had newly gained their equality with men in the passing of the nineteenth amendment, a brief resume of women's long and arduous struggle for her so-called freedom has been included.

WOMAN'S STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS WITH MAN

In all the great movements of mankind, women have played a vital part. The Pilgrim women endured the hardships of the first winter in the New World, proving their courage and endurance. Throughout the American Revolution, women took a part in the fight against tyranny as did the French women in the French Revolution. Without the skill and bravery of the pioneer women, the West could not have been settled for they labored and impro-

vised to make homes in the wilderness, and fought beside their men with guns when hostile Indians attacked.

From the very first, women have contributed to culture and humanity by entering into arts and sciences, such as medicine, government, nursing, welfare, education, literature, journalism, sculpture, architecture, engineering, drama, international relations, labor organizations and aviation (48, p. 8833).

Women strove for educational, economic and political equality with men through an organized effort called woman's rights or the feminist movement. This included the equal suffrage movement, which originated in America. It was first permanently organized in this country where were recorded the earliest known demands for representation by taxpaying women. Sentiment which favored equal political, educational and economic freedom has steadily increased since the Revolution (50, p. 681). In 1776 Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John Adams, then in the Continental Congress: "I long to hear that you have declared an independence, and by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary to make, I desire you would remember the ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than were your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention are not paid to the ladies we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound to obey any laws in which we have no voice or representation" (50, p. 681).

The Old Province Charter gave women who owned property in Massachusetts colony the right to vote from 1691 to 1780. These

women could vote for all officers except the governor and members of the legislature after Massachusetts adopted a state constitution. Both the Continental Congress and the National Constitutional Convention of 1787 left the determination of the conditions of suffrage to the respective states, but New Jersey was the only state to confer it on women. Their constitution of 1776 gave the franchise to "all inhabitants worth fifty pounds proclamation money" (50,p.683). A revision of the election laws in 1790 used the words "she or he," which plainly included women in the electorate. Since enough women voted to gain the ill will of politicians, the Legislature in 1807 passed an arbitrary act which limited the suffrage to "white male citizens," thus New Jersey took away the women's voting privileges.

Then during the first half of the nineteenth century there was a period of rising humanism in which a number of courageous and gifted women came to the front. In order to intelligently share in the world's work, their first task was to secure facilities for higher education for women. Later they helped with the anti-slavery and temperance campaigns, despite the fact that the more conservative males and society in general were shocked by women who appeared publicly as speakers or delegates. And in 1826 Frances Wright took it upon herself to publicly advocate woman's suffrage from the lecture platform. The anti-slavery question was growing more momentous and had a great effect on woman suffrage, which was a direct outgrowth of the anti-slavery struggle. In 1828 Sarah and Angelina Grimke of South Carolina emancipated their slaves, came North and by their speeches aroused public

sentiment, while women of the North who opposed slavery also demanded equal civil rights with men. Most persons poked fun at the women's demands, but a few statesmen and preachers supported them.

After William Lloyd Garrison became interested, the American Anti-Slavery Society was formed. Women were prominent in this movement from the very beginning and the first Women's Anti-Slavery Convention was held in New York in 1837. Such names as Lucretia Mott, Lydia Marie Child, Maria Weston Chapman, Abby Kelly, Abby Hopper Gibbons and many others became widely recognized. The women discussed thoroughly the whole question of human rights and began to take part in business meetings and public debates of society (49, p. 446).

Several women delegates, among whom was the Quakeress Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton resolved to hold a women's rights convention, but they did not succeed until 1848, when they held their first organized meeting for equal political rights. Except for the time of the Civil War, the movement went on continuously gaining in force. At this meeting at Seneca Falls, New York, they discussed mainly the idea of voting for women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright and Mary Ann McClintock, framed a resolution, a strong "Declaration of Sentiments" or list of grievances. It was modeled on the Declaration of Independence. It was signed, and other resolutions were adopted setting forth the remedies required to right the wrongs. Although such broadminded men as William Lloyd Garrison, Henry Ward Beecher,

Wendell Phillips, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Gerrit Smith, defended the right of women to take part in the business meetings and debates, and were strong champions of votes for women, the women faced ridicule for many years.

Shortly after the meeting at Seneca Falls, the Bloomer costume, (Plate I) named after Amelia Bloomer, appeared there, worn by Elizabeth Smith Miller (throughout the Congressional term of her father), Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Amelia Bloomer. Its comfort was undeniable, but it was identified with radical tendencies, such as bobbed hair, and that sealed its fate, for people were not yet ready for short-skirted, short-haired women anymore than they were ready for self-sufficient, self-thinking, and self-supporting women. The clinging vine, swooning in crinoline, was then the ideal. It was still at that time against all precedent to follow a fashion that emanated from the common people (24, p. 183).

In spite of women's efforts the fourteenth amendment became part of the Constitution of the United States in 1868, giving voting rights to all males in the country, but still suffrage was not granted to women. The women were angered and decided to band together for action. Women from nineteen states met in New York in May, 1869, to form the National Woman Suffrage Association. Headed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, they worked for an amendment to the Federal Constitution which would grant voting rights to women. Another group headed by Henry Ward Beecher and Lucy Stone formed the American Woman Suffrage Association in November, 1869, to obtain suffrage through amendments to the state constitutions. The two organizations united

EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

The Bloomer Costume (16, p. 216)

- A. Amelia Bloomer wearing the Bloomer costume
- B. Elizabeth Smith Miller wearing the
Bloomer costume

PLATE I



Mrs. Bloomer wearing the dress she tried to introduce in 1849.

A

Elizabeth Smith Miller, the first woman to wear the bloomer costume in a Washington drawing room.



B

in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association which then pursued both national and state woman suffrage amendments.

Representatives from the National Association appeared before committees of every Congress for fifty years, but the campaign within the states showed the first results. The first territorial legislature of Wyoming gave women the vote in 1869; next year Utah followed suit, and both states came into the Union in 1890 and 1896 respectively, with clauses for woman suffrage in their constitutions. Colorado granted woman suffrage in 1893, and Idaho in 1896. As the twentieth century started, the ballot for women was looked upon as a many-sided problem in which the welfare of society was deeply concerned. As a result of this political movement in the Western states, in 1910 a woman suffrage amendment was submitted by almost a unanimous vote in the Washington legislature. The women made a thorough campaign, carrying it into every county in the state, and were rewarded by receiving a majority of nearly three to one. California adopted woman suffrage in 1911. This was the greatest victory it had ever won, for California was an old, thickly populated and wealthy state, having commercial relations with, and known in, all parts of the world. With this triumph the movement passed the crisis, and the National American Association presented a petition to Congress of about half a million names for a Federal Amendment. Kansas, Arizona, and Oregon granted suffrage to women in 1912, Alaska in 1913, and Montana and Nevada in 1914.

The equal suffrage states were the leaders in legislation to protect wage-earning women. Six of the eleven Commonwealths which endorsed a minimum wage for women workers, granted votes to women, and only in the equal suffrage states were women safeguarded by an eight hour working day. In those states too, school teachers, men and women, received equal pay for equal service. In fact, at this time, the suffrage question was very largely a labor question. Without the ballot the 8,000,000 women workers could not have had an equal voice in social control. The ballot was needed to halt the exploitations of the labor of women and children through low wages. This in turn drove men out of employment.

The militant Congressional Union, headed by Alice Paul was formed in 1913 because of dissatisfaction with the conservative methods of the National Association. Its members picketed the White House and burned publicly the speeches of President Woodrow Wilson. The Congressional Union called itself the National Woman's Party after 1917. This group sought perfect equality between the sexes both in law and custom. Its members even opposed legislation to protect women. They urged Congress to pass their "equal rights amendment" to the Constitution. This amendment read: "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and in every place subject to its jurisdiction." (54, p. 33).

By 1914 the number of equal suffrage states had reached eleven and favorable public sentiment was increasing rapidly.

The opposition concentrated on states where an amendment to its constitution was submitted. No further successes were accomplished until the great victory of New York in 1917. This success gave great prestige to the movement, and although each of these campaigns required a vast amount of money and work by the women, they could not be stopped. By the end of 1919 fifteen states had equal suffrage, and twelve other states gave women the right to vote for presidential electors.

Campaigns had begun in Washington, D. C. for a woman suffrage amendment in 1912. Every Congress since 1878 had been presented with woman suffrage amendments to the Federal Constitution, but before 1914 it had never been discussed in the House, and only once in the Senate. By 1917 its ultimate passage was inevitable; the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives placed the Susan B. Anthony Federal Suffrage amendment before the House. The amendment read: "The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state, on account of sex" (51, p. 8841). The proposal received the required two-thirds vote in the House in 1918 but lacked two votes in the Senate. It was passed at a special session in May, 1919; this was a newly elected Congress. Thirty-six states had to approve the suffrage amendment before it could become a law. Many thought such action would take three or more years, but with special efforts by party partisans, women were able to vote in the next presidential election. On August 26, 1920 the nineteenth amendment was proclaimed so that women citizens of the United States could vote at the presidential election for

the first time in November of that year.

Since 1920 women delegates have played an important part in the conventions of all political parties in the United States. Women senators and representatives have been elected to numerous state legislatures, and women are eligible to all civil offices. Women have held different city offices, from mayor on down, and Texas and Wyoming have had women governors.

SOME SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRENDS OF THE PERIOD

In every era some ideal or ideals are developed which predominate over others. These may be religious, political, social, or economic; they may be conservative or radical. But no matter what they are or from what source they have arisen, their influence is felt in the fashions of the time.

A quotation from Sullivan presents the spirit of restlessness which existed in the United States just before World War I. "This is a get-things-done-quick age. It is a ready-to-put-on-and-wear-home age, a just-add-hot-water-and-serve age, a new-speed-record-every-day age, a take-it-or-leave-it-I'm-very-busy age " (26, p.288).

About this time, all the old ideas of social betterment were brought forth--temperance, prohibition, international peace, equality of negroes, the well-being of farmers and factory workers and women's rights. These ideas found expression in lobbying activities, books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, lectures, and speeches. The growing interest in social improvement reflected changing social and economic conditions (8, p. 605).

The movement to enfranchise women had been underway before 1900. The changed economic and social conditions stemming from industrialization prepared women for political equality. They were allowed by industry to enter gainful occupations. Between 1870 and 1900 the number employed increased from 1,800,000 to 5,300,000. They did yeoman service in social agencies. By 1900 about 79 percent of all colleges admitted women, and by the same year two out of every three teachers were women. During the progressive period from 1900 to 1917 additional political rights were extended to them, until by 1914 they enjoyed full equality in eleven states, all in the West. Then the wartime efforts of women in jobs that ranged from Red Cross nursing to serving as "farmerettes" won support for woman's suffrage (Plate II). The Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the right to vote, was adopted by Congress in 1919 and ratified in 1920 (3). "Woman suffrage, many felt confident, would introduce into politics the presumed-to-be superior ethics of women; and into the business of government their housewifely traits and other desirable qualities" (26, p. 128).

The automobile which made its appearance in America at the beginning of the century brought man freedom from world-old limitations and modified time and distance. It also broke up the old pattern of organized society. Overnight Henry Ford became the biggest news by sharing his profits with his 13,000 employees. Where men had been receiving one or two dollars a day, they now received a minimum wage of five dollars a day. This he explained as a "plain act of social justice" for he said the best use I can

EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

Suffragists in parade on Fifth Avenue

(Vogue 41-50: 64, 1917)

PLATE II

REPRESENTATIVE WOMEN OF NEW YORK MARCHED IN THE RANKS OF THE SUFFRAGE PARADE ON FIFTH AVENUE



Miss Audrey Neilson Osborn and Mrs. Joseph Sampson Stevens carried an enrolment board bearing the signatures of eight hundred women who want the vote in New York. In the same division were shown over a million signatures



(Left) Mrs. Oliver Harriman headed the five hundred women whose sashes were inscribed "Mothers, Wives, Sisters of Soldiers and Sailors"



(Left to right) Mrs. Gifford Pinckot, Mrs. J. Gordon Douglas, Mrs. Cornelius H. Tangeman, and Mrs. K. McCook Knox showed their enthusiasm for the cause as they marched up Fifth Avenue from Washington Arch to Fifty-ninth Street. The parade was an impressive one lasting three hours



Four photographs by Paul Thompson

Mrs. James Lee's Laidlaw, Mr. J. Norman d. R. Whitton, and Mrs. John Lusk's Blair were of the same division — which means, of course, the five hundred leaders who headed divisions of the Suffrage Parade



Mrs. Emily D. M. Landeshare, Mrs. William Wood, Mrs. George L. Embley, and Mrs. J. Gordon Douglas are four of the four hundred women who headed divisions of the Suffrage Parade

make of my money is to make more work for more men. This was in 1914, the overlapping period of horses and automobiles. This was one of the actions that started a new development in factories. Scientific management and mass production were the basic factors involved.

Frederick W. Taylor, who has been called the father of scientific management, revolutionized industry and reduced the cost of production. He seemed to change every aspect of life in which he became involved. He even improved the tennis racket. With organized labor, which regarded him with suspicion, he was forever at war, but had the satisfaction of seeing part of organized labor, in the textile and clothing-making trades, use his point of view and voluntarily adopt scientific management on a basis of sharing the increased profits with capital (26).

Migration from country to city, from farmhouse to flat or skyscraper apartment, led to many changes in human relations. City living did not encourage neighborliness. Largeness of the unit of industry, coupled with standardization, led to impersonality. To offset this, clubs for adults, such as the Rotary Club, were formed. For the children who were reared in city apartments immune to farm chores and the exercise that went with them, summer camps arose.

Some of the developments in the field of arts at this time, had a significant bearing on fashions of the day. One of the most important influences was the Russian Ballet which first appeared in Paris in 1909, and by 1914 had appeared in every important

city in Europe and in the United States. The Russian Ballet, a part of the new art movement, was the new spirit which had taken hold of the twentieth century; a spirit of freedom in thought, freedom from restraint, and of dynamic vitality. The artists used bold and brilliant colors which had an exciting and stimulating effect. Bakst, who interpreted the costumes of the ballet, designed for Madame Paquin at her request. Diaghilev, Fokine, and Pavlova, each master in his own field, gave inspirations for fashions which were exotic and Oriental in feeling.

The Parisian designer, Paul Poiret, capitalized on this Oriental influence by creating costumes which began by shocking, but ended up conquering the town. He was one of the first to insist that there should be close collaboration between the dress-designer and scenic artist. His first theatrical for which he designed was "La Minaret"; later he designed for "The Thousand and Second Night," from which people copied ideas for magnificent balls (18).

The outstanding teachers of dancing at this time, 1911 to 1915, were Vernon and Irene Castle, a couple who shared distinguished manners, grace in their art, and elevated taste, to an extent that made them national characters. They started "Castle House," sponsored by several persons important in the life of New York, in which the announced purpose was to turn the tide "against the orgy that the world indulged in during the vogue of the turkey trot." Their effort was less to overcome the new steps than to have them danced unobjectionably. Ragtime was said to be the

spirit of America and that it seemed to fit the nervousness of our climate and our people; that the dash and vim of it was in the American blood; that it was the rhythmical and melodic expression of life in the United States (26).

While life in America seemed to be care-free, things in Europe were taking on a different aspect. The trouble which had been brewing among the Balkan states came to a head with the murder by a pro-Serb sympathizer of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian crown. Austria declared war on July 28, 1914; Russian mobilization caused Germany to declare war on Russia, and this was followed by a similar declaration on France. In order to attack France, German troops entered Belgium, an act which brought England into the war. Other powers joined each side until the conflict became a "World War" (23, p. 239).

After the war started, America became intensely alive. Wealth poured into the nation from war profits derived from supplies that were sent to other nations. This caused a tremendous rise in general prosperity. The energies which had been dissipated in personal grudges against capital and its power were now diverted toward the exciting and all engrossing task of making money. Jobs and high wages existed for everyone.

In April 1917 America entered the war, and fashion became insignificant. Patriotism filled everyone with the desire to save the world for democracy. More and more women were needed to replace men and they took jobs as nurses, stretcher bearers, ambulance drivers, workers in ammunition plants, factory hands

and other similar occupations.

On Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, President Wilson wrote this message:

My Fellow Countrymen: The Armistice was signed this morning. Everything for which America fought has been accomplished. It will now be our fortunate duty to assist by example, by sober friendly counsel, and by material aid in the establishment of just democracies throughout the world (1, p. 15).

People celebrated wildly, but were restless, suspicious and uneasy. This was largely due to communism which had arisen in Russia. Americans feared its coming, but realized it probably would not become important since it had failed in Germany and other European nations. A sense of disillusionment remained because people felt they should be enjoying themselves more than they were. Another thing that made the people, not only in America, but all over the world, restless was the fact that before the war, England had been the dominating nation. Germany had envied this position and tried to take it. Although she had not succeeded, she had weakened Britain seriously. In 1920, and up to 1935, it was uncertain whether there was any one leading nation. When a leadership long held by one nation ceases, and there is failure of any other nation to step into the succession, a period of chaos appears historically to be the rule.

In the course of events, America should have stepped into Britain's position, because she emerged from the war by far the world's richest and most powerful nation. But America did not care for the power, or did not know how to use it. She did not take the responsibility. For a time, the world considered a

proposal of a League of Nations. That, too, America rejected. "Due to this confusion more than anything else, arose the conditions and the apprehensions of worse, that bedeviled the world in 1920 and for at least 15 years following" (28).

The laborers who received high wages during the war were not going to give them up so easily. They had had all the luxuries that money could buy and they intended to keep them. Riots, bombings and strikes took place. Prices soared and a fear seemed to take hold of everyone.

Then too, American soldiers, women nurses and war workers had come under the influence of continental manners and standards during the war, and their torn nerves craved speed, excitement and passion. They were expected to settle down into the humdrum routine of American life as if nothing had happened; they could not do it, and very disrespectfully said so (1, p. 94).

The attitude of the younger generation in the twenties was not wholly caused by the war, nor was it as new with them as they thought. The causes went as far back as Darwin in the 1860's, and included the doctrines of Freud about sex which reached America in 1910, the hedonistic quatrains of Omar Khayyam which were being read about the same time, the jeering at conventionality that Bernard Shaw had kept up for more than a generation, the novels of H. G. Wells. All of these influences along with others came to a climax in the twenties (28, p. 389). The other principal forces which brought about the revolution in manners and morals were entirely American. These were prohibition, the automobile, confession and sex magazines, and the movies (1, p. 99), which had an increasing effect on fashion as well as ways of living.

More marked than these, though, was the effect of woman's growing independence of the drudgeries of housekeeping, along with other things. Smaller houses were built. Canned goods, bakeries, vacuum cleaners, electric irons were emancipating women from routine to live their own lives. Telephones, radios, and ready-made clothes became more common. Women took new jobs, which brought about a feeling of comparative economic independence, and a slackening of husbandly and parental authority. Women still had emotions to burn. These were spent in the dance of the day, a negro innovation called the Charleston. It was followed and made more ultra in the black bottom. Both were violently acrobatic, the dancing equivalent of the frenzy of a negro jazz orchestra. They were extreme displays of the negro influence on American ballroom dancing. Sports became increasingly important, and women wanted to be able to lure men on the golf course as well as in the office. They accepted the cigarette rapidly. Conversation, books, and the theater were very frank. Divorce was becoming more customary, and women knew that they no longer had to marry if they wished to stay single and work. They could be casual and light-hearted "free" companions to the tired disillusioned men who had returned from war. Men and women drank together. All women wanted to be young. Even the flapper grandmother wanted to be like the rest of the girls to the extent that she dieted and bought her clothes where the eighteen year old girl bought hers. Improved heating systems in homes along with the closed cars were important influences toward the wearing of fewer clothes. To allow the desired freedom, women's clothes

became so scanty that in 1928 the amount of cloth for a costume was seven yards compared to nineteen and one-fourth yards in 1913. "The emancipation of women has affected feminine fashions in much the same way the French Revolution affected masculine fashions " (17, p. 160).

In the archeological field, the greatest discovery had been made in 1922. Lord Carnarvon and his American assistant Howard Carter, discovered the tomb of the Egyptian King Tutankhamen in the valley of the Kings near Luxor. This event had a definite impact on the prevailing fashions.

Another hopeful sign was in the literature that was being written, such as "Arrowsmith" by Sinclair Lewis and "Strange Interlude" by Eugene O'Neill. These works all introduced a new note of depth and discernment- a searching for new values. People were tired of chaos. A new philosophy was being formed in the minds of people who were groping for new ideals.

It takes time to build a new code when the prevailing one has been completely destroyed as was true following the first World War. The revolutionists near the end of the twenties were learning to be at home in the world, to rid themselves of their obsession with sex, and to discover a new set of enduring satisfactions. Women began to revolt against the masculinity of manners and attire. They realized that they could be free and feminine at the same time. The wholesome qualities of American womanhood were asserting themselves once more (1).

When Herbert Hoover became president in 1928, the country was at the height of prosperity, and spending was a virtue. People had gambled their life savings away in Florida real estate. Then the inevitable crash of 1929 came, leaving a bewildered and saddened world with tremendous problems. "Those who lost everything blamed themselves, or a banker or a political party, but did not think of questioning the basic soundness of our social or economic structure" (8, p. 717).

FASHIONS FROM 1910 TO 1930

There is something arbitrary in choosing the post-war twenties as a period of costume for study. There is an element of artificiality in all such limits to certain periods; for there is no magic in a period as such, and all ages are ages of transition. Historical periods neither begin nor end abruptly, and neither do fashion periods.

For example, it took the silhouette from 1904 to 1924 to change completely from the S-shaped curve to the straight uninhibited lines of the post-war twenties. The smart woman of 1904 was obviously feminine in contrast to the fashionable woman of 1924 whose attire was characterized by simplicity, comfort, and the lack of superfluous furbelows.

In comparing the costume of 1904 with that of 1924 (Plate 3), we find the towering coiffure of 1904 composed of family "hair-looms" contrasted with the coiffure of 1924, which was reduced

EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

Contrasting the fashions of 1904 and 1924

A - 1904 costume

B - 1924 costume

(Vogue 64: 40, 1924)

PLATE III



A



B

LAS POLLEN

to the utmost brevity by the shearing of the locks. Ridiculously large hats were perched precariously on top of the edifice mentioned, while small head-hugging cloches not only concealed the shorn locks, but shielded the eyes as well. The high-boned collar of 1904, which was not only uncomfortable but disfiguring, gave way to a free flying "muffler" which lent more of an air to the low cut neck. The cruel whale-bone stays of the S-shaped era, which created the well defined waist-line, were supplanted by a narrow boneless elastic girdle, when the figure returned to a more natural silhouette. Instead of two or three beruffled petticoats, which hid beneath the trailing dress, the short slim skirts boasted only one or sometimes none at all. The encumbering sleeves which required yards and yards of materials, were replaced by long snug sleeves, which gradually disappeared entirely. Along with the other restrictions women of 1904 wore their feet cramped into small pointed shoes and teetered on excessively high heels. Their hands too were badly cramped in tight glace gloves, while in 1924 women's newly found freedom allowed them to wear low-heeled shoes and gloves which were even a bit too large. (34, p.40).

An interesting presentation of the struggle which was necessary to bring about the drastic change in silhouette is given by Woodward (55, p. 128) in her discussion of "The Battle of the Peekaboo Waist." She said, "Whenever I go into an office, I think how lucky I am that I don't have to wear the clothes that I wore when I first went to work. Then I think how grateful the young woman of today ought to be to those of us who fought the battle of the peekaboo waist, a battle that was sharp and bitter. Style didn't change from great quantities of extra clothes to a thin

silk dress without sleeves just by themselves (Plate IV). Every inch of that discarded clothing took a battle."

The foregoing paragraphs give evidence that in order to fully understand a period such as the post-war twenties, it is necessary to consider the preceding years which served as a transition to the period known as the "flapper age." Since 1910 marked a definite change from the S-shaped curve to the straightening of the figure, the author has chosen this date for the beginning of the study of fashions.

In the first part of the present century, fashion had already decreed nearly as many changes in the outlines of our costumes as there were in the entire nineteenth century (11, p. 32). An important event took place in this fashion period; the return of the natural figure (45, p. 354). Women resumed the upright position. The top of the corset was lower, leaving the bosom free; the waist was not so tight. Wide skirts were abandoned and narrow ones introduced, of which the extreme expression was the hobble skirt of 1911 (Plate V, A and B). Mrs. Samuel Stevens Sands wore the tailored mode of the contrasting coat and plaid hobble skirt, with high button shoes as she followed the sport of racing (Plate VI, B).

As has been indicated before, a readiness for a change in silhouette was brought about by some of the following factors. Woman was making headway in her struggle for emancipation or equality with men. In 1914 Champ Clark predicted that woman in the United States would have the vote by 1917, which actually

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

Fashions from 1914 to 1926

(Crawford, Plate 56)

PLATE IV



EXPLANATION OF PLATE V

Poiret's designs inspired by Oriental influence

A - B - Hobble skirts

C - Peg-top skirt

D - Minaret tunic

(Hall, p.96 and 100)

PLATE V



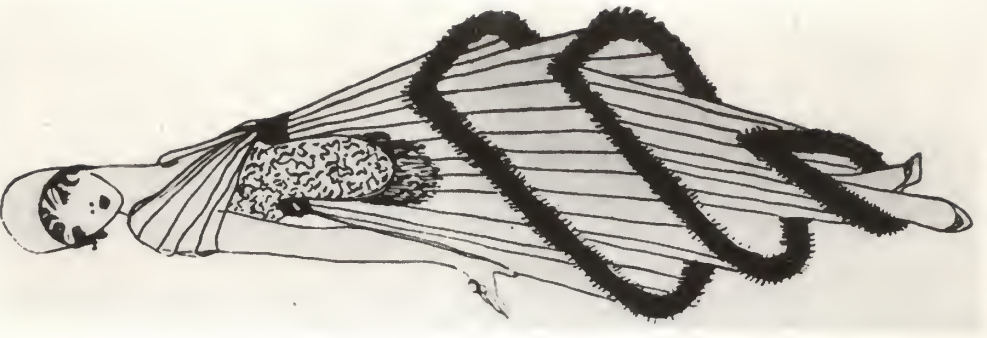
A



B



C



D

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI

Fashions of 1913

A - Empire gown

B - Mannish suit

(Vogue 41-50: 22 and 27, 1913)

PLATE VI



A



B

came about in 1920. There was increased activity in the fields of sports and athletics; new ideas of health and hygiene were being accepted; scientific inventions, such as the automobile, brought about a changed mode of living and created a necessity for more functional clothes. Emancipation of woman from all kinds of taboos, talk about sex, smoking, divorce, and the chaperon had its beginning at this time. All of these factors had their influence upon the creation of the most unfeminine silhouette of the post-war twenties.

Some of the curious designs which made their appearance in the "hodge podge of fashions" of this era may be traced to such influences as the Russian Ballet, and the Japanese-Russian War, which brought Oriental ideas to the fore and was capitalized upon by the French designer, Paul Poiret.

In 1912 Poiret designed the Persian costumes for "La Minaret," a playlet, creating a belted tunic knee-length with wide flaring edge over a slim flaring silhouette (Plate V, D). The Minaret tunic shared honors with the peg-top silhouette which was developed from the sheath gown and the gradual elimination of the petticoat (Plate V, C). Many efforts were made to interest designers in dresses requiring more material. The pannier effect of the peg-top skirt resulted. An extra allowance of material was bunched at the hips or sometimes left hanging loose in a long loop on each side with the necessary narrowing of the bottom of the skirt to give the effect of a huge top. Inspired by the

Russian Ballet, Poiret introduced fashions such as trousered skirts or harem drape skirts, turbaned heads, dresses of bright colors, trimmed with gold embroidery, pearls and diamonds. These fashions taken from the theater changed tastes and helped along the idea that there was no turning back. Poiret is also credited with developing the tunic-like peasant blouses, made on the uncompromising lines of the Russian peasant smock. In fact, he launched the Oriental idea with the so-called Confucius cloak as early as 1905 (16).

Another form of tunic which was popular at this time was the high-waisted Empire gown modeled after that worn in the early 1800's. An attractive gown of this style appeared in a 1913 issue of Vogue (Plate VI, A). The gown of Malines lace was hung over pale pink chiffon, and was girdled with Saxe-blue velvet drawn through a buckle of jet. A band of rose-colored satin and folds of white tulle formed the corsage. Over this was worn a mantle of Saxe-blue chiffon with a wired collar of Malines. Particularly pretty were the long sleeves of blue chiffon. This gown was seen at the playlet "La Minaret."

As World War I started, in 1914, Poiret's minaret tunic was the favorite, but during the war fashions were not very significant. The uncorseted figure was the most notable feature. The most characteristic silhouette of the time was the silhouette almost pyramidal in shape created by short flared coats trimmed with bands of fur worn over dark suits with full short skirts,

and light lace or chiffon blouses. High-top shoes and sometimes spats were worn (Plate VII).

In 1914 the chemise frock was born but was not generally used until 1916. At first it was a straight slip over which was worn a straight tunic or over-blouse with long tight sleeves. Then the tunic lengthened, took on a belt placed low at the hips and the underslip disappeared (Plate VII) (45, p. 355). A campaign was waged against the abandonment of the high-necked blouse or bodice. One would have thought that necks had not been exposed to fashions before, but the open throat neck was triumphant and this victory was not likely to be allowed to slip by the liberty-loving years of the war (18, p. 120).

With the very narrow skirts, immense hats were worn (Plate IV), the direct descendant of the large hats of the last decade, but they were even wider and adorned with more plumes. This was a curious example of the persistence of one element of fashion into a period when all the other elements were completely reversed. But all of the hats were not large; they were of all sizes and shapes and varied from the very feminine to Poiret's very chic little tailored derby of black velvet and white cloth trimmed with small gilt buttons and cords. Once having seized upon masculine headgear the "Parisienne knocked it into the cocked hat" or derby just as the notion happened to strike her, or Poiret (29, p.22).

On the whole, clothes adapted themselves to a war-time schedule. They became more economical and reflected dignity and simplicity because of the seriousness of the times. Some of the

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII

Fashions and War - United States

(Crawford, Plate 57)

PLATE VII



war-time jobs taken by women demanded uniforms, others a sort of semi-uniform, a strictly one-piece dress in keeping with the nature of the work, they were simple in line and lacked trimming. To counteract the morbid spirit, their playtime dresses were the gayest they could find. They represented their attitude of "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow- there may be no tomorrow" (16, p. 110).

The beginning of 1918 saw some American women in regulation uniforms of the United States Government, Red Cross, Motor Corps, and Ambulance Service (Plate VII). And when the Armistice was signed women were still fascinated by these uniforms and were reluctant to give them up. All this had a psychological effect, and the much exploited boyish form was the result. Women of all ages and sizes tried to flatten their breasts and by wearing tailored suits, and other mannish apparel, look as much like men as they could. They abandoned their corsets, cut their hair short, and gave up the pretense of having a waist. Women became completely emancipated and began demanding equal opportunity, equal hours of work, equal pay, and equal everything. The men protested with much excitement (16, p. 111).

Clothes reflected the influence of the uniform. Women wore regulation sailor suits of navy blue serge, with white silk braid on the collars and cuffs, embroidered stars on the collar, embroidered emblems on the sleeves and a shield which was detachable. A silk tie was worn with it. The skirt was buttoned to the waist (Plate VIII, A). For yachting an officer's tunic type costume of

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIII

Designs showing uniform influence

A - Sailor dress

B - Yachting outfit

(Vogue 41-50: 3 and 33, 1916)

PLATE VIII



A



B

white gabardine trimmed with white braid and tassel was created by Charles Worth (Plate VIII, B).

A new innovation, that of a separate topcoat, was produced in 1916 (Plate IV). This may have grown out of the need of women doing war work, or of an interest in sports. The first ones had voluminous skirts gathered into a separate waist to correlate with the gowns of the year.

One of the most remarkable features of the fashions of 1917 was the lack of blouses. Women wore frocks. The designer Lanvin showed one dress of straight lines; width at the hips was attained by black moire ribbon on the blue and white crepe frock.

In 1918 a very tailored dark suit called the Eton jacket suit was worn (Plate IX). It had long snug sleeves and a short bolero. A vest was worn below the bolero. The vest was of a light color, as was the blouse worn with the outfit. The skirt was long and narrow. It came a little below the high-top buttoned spats which were worn over the shoes. A high-crowned hat with a small brim completed the costume.

In 1919 Lanvin presented a straight tailored suit that was uneven in hemline. Sometimes it was open on the sides, and rounded up a little at the opening on one side, while the other was perfectly straight. Some of the jackets were very straight and were put on over the head like a seaman's blouse.

When the men came home from war, they found women wearing dresses reminiscent of Civil War days, as to the cut of jacket. The jacket of one dress (Plate X, A) was of taffeta and had buttons snugly fastening it. The billowing skirt was trimmed with

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IX

Eton Jacket Suit of 1918

(Hall, p. 113)

PLATE IX



EXPLANATION OF PLATE X

Civil War or Victorian Influence

A - Fringed jacket dress

B - Blue serge frock

(Vogue 53-54:81, 1919)

PLATE X



A

B

linen fringe which took the place of the hem. The dress was made more quaint by rows of cording on the skirt. The blouse was of sheer cream batiste which appeared in a shawl collar at the top, and in the puffings at the slits in the sleeves. Another dress (Plate X, B) which showed Victorian influence was a blue serge frock for the young girl. It had a draped scarf worn over the button trimmed bodice. Its skirt was full and smocked. Irish lace collar and cuffs and a black bow at the throat completed it.

Because of war-time occupations, women wore trousers which brought about knickers, and later in 1919 pajamas, which have changed from atrocious forms of play-time wear to practical tailored sleeping garments. They also paved the way for shorts and slacks (4, p. 168).

The most fantastic decade of the American fashion followed World War I in those years of inflation and prosperity. French fashions and fabrics exercised a dominating influence, but American designers began to assert their own talents in original conceptions or in modifications of French models to suit American taste in clothes (Plate XI). Extreme silhouettes showed medieval Italian influence, Louis XIII, and Directoire lines.

Typically American was a model shown by Steine and Blaine (Plate XII). In this model a cape was designed to enfold a smart town frock of beige twill. The cape was obviously borrowed from the Puritans and attained the uneven hem so much in favor by tucking up its front. Cut steel beads made a bright embroidery, and beige Canton crepe lined the cape. The hat of crin had a smart

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XI

A decade of American fashion

(Crawford, Plate 58)

PLATE XI



EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII

Puritan Influence

(Vogue 57-58:35, 1921)

PLATE XII



trimming of pleated ribbon.

According to Allen (1, p.2), the average American woman of 1919 wore her skirt rather tight at the ankles six inches from the ground. Vogue came out with the startling news that skirts might even become shorter. Low shoes had come for spring, perhaps as a result of the shortage of leather following the war.

The uncorseted figure was finally established with its low waisted girdle of satin or knitted elastic practically boneless. For the first time the garment was worn next to the body. It was a foundation garment consisting of brassiere and panties in one. The petticoat was eliminated unless the transparency of the day or evening gown necessitated an under piece (45, p. 366).

The girls of 1919 said, "Now we can enjoy ourselves." For the war had given them liberty when they were scarcely out of their teens. In all classes of society, they had found economic freedom. They had money to spend and that was a more valuable equality than anything that could have been obtained by the clamor for women's rights. For the first time in history the young girl was free. It was she who was to dictate the fashion for the next decade; it was she who was to inspire the "flapper mode" of the post-war twenties (18, p. 124).

In 1920 Franklin Simon made fashion history by introducing their first Bramley dress. It was a copy of a Premet model- a simple two-piece wool jersey dress with white collar and cuffs. The dress came along at the right time for approximately 100,000 dresses were sold in all colors, and the prices varied. It

established a permanent place in the American woman's wardrobe for at least one simple, comfortable, easy-to-wear dress. This is the dress that typified the flapper, or the young girl (4, p. 58). Knitted suits and sports clothes became big fashion news. Tailored blouses were worn with tailored suits. Coat frocks were introduced. This was partly due to the fact that traveling, motoring, and golf were so popular. Women found tailored clothes so practical that they would not give them up.

There was a great variety in suits. There was a coat, (Plate XIII, A) a rather severe tailleur of Oxford suiting which was knee-length and pleated flatly over the hips. "The Bel Ami," (Plate XIII, B) was Doeuillet's short coated suit, made of rep with beige cape and points of self-trimming. Worth's knee length coat of gray woolen (Plate XIII, C) was untrimmed save for large buttons. Premet's suit (Plate XIII, D) of pale gray rep, was trimmed with hemstitching over crepe de Chine. The low waist was tied sash fashion, a Premet characteristic.

When sports of all sorts became the major activity of the American people, it was necessary for each particular kind to have its own special costume, which gave designers an opportunity to express what they thought was appropriate. Women did not dress for reason, beauty, or men, but to express their personalities. Among the best-dressed sportswomen, a small felt hat, often of a slightly mushroom shape and invariably very plainly trimmed, usually with ribbon, was worn with a simple dress of wool or one of the new silk and wool materials, either knitted or of jersey, or with

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIII

Suits of 1922

- A - Oxford suiting coat
- B - Doeuillet's "Bel Ami"
- C - Worth's knee-length coat
- D - Premet's suit

(Vogue 59:27, 1922)

PLATE XIII



A

B

C

D

a tailored tweed suit. Either of these, on excessively chilly days, were covered by a smartly cut outer wrap of some serviceable material, suitable for all weathers. Brogues or very plain slippers with low heels were accompanied by heavy silk and wool or all-wool stockings. These were usually of a neutral shade harmonizing closely with the costume, a bright note of color often having been supplied by a brilliant muffler of silk or wool or some other accessory. The most satisfactory as well as the smartest gloves were of washable suede.

American women's sports costumes were miracles of chic and convenience; they could, if they preferred, wear them all day long, progressing from breakfast to golf, golf to lunch, lunch to tennis, tennis to tea, without the necessity of changing anything but their shoes. The American women's attribute was, and is, their well-built strong and slender figure, which they managed to keep longer than women of other nations, and to which sports clothes were particularly becoming.

There were many silhouettes by the end of 1923. Some of them were the tiered, the tubular, the floating, the full, the circular, and the chemise (Plates IV, VII, and XI). The tubular held the favor by 1924. Not for several years had there been so many clearly defined silhouettes and outlines that differed so radically that there was no meeting place except in their common enthusiasm for the flat back. The reason for this variety, was in part, that there were so many great creators at work, each earnestly striving for individuality. Callot first thought of

the Indo-Chinese silhouette which massed its fullness in front giving the flattest back of all. Jenny created an Indo-Chinese inspired design (Plate XIV, A) taken from a Rodier chintz of red and faint green designs painted on a white background. The frock beneath was of black crepe de Chine, bordered with a line of red on the panels. Jenny was also responsible for a dress with its skirt gathered into godets on one side under a big chou or great bow or puff. Patou designed an organdy robe de style gown (Plate XIV, B). It had the bouffancy of the Second Empire of 1850. Chanel had great influence. Simplicity and youthfulness were her watchwords; the straight line was her medium of expression. The silhouette with its short skirt and semi-low waist-line was very often seen in daytime dresses. Vionnet first introduced a dress with a bias cut and a cowl neckline in 1923. It was Vionnet who in 1919 designed a plain dress of crepe de Chine with long sleeves and trimmed only by hemstitching with initials on the left side of the blouse. This became the fashion "Ford" of that generation. It was the proto-type of the sports dresses of France, England and the United States (4, p. 60).

Another influence which was current after World War I, was that of peasant costumes, particularly of the European countries. Lanvin used the Breton peasant as a youthful tailleur with a short flaring coat. (Plate XV). The Parisienne blouse had a wide white organdy collar.

One of the historical periods which deserves special mention

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIV

Fashions of 1923

A - Indo-Chinese or National costume influence

B - Second Empire or period influence

(Vogue 61:50 and 52, 1923)

PLATE XIV



A



B

P. B. ...

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XV

Breton Peasant influence in fashions of 1922

(Vogue 59:26, 1922)

PLATE XV



LANVIN

The costume of the Breton peasant is the inspiration for Lanvin's youthful tailleurs with short flaring coats. The Parisienne in the sketch, turned out by Lanvin in a correct spring tailleur, is spending a week-end in Brittany, where the lady learns the origin of her new spring suit

is the Egyptian. Interest in this period was aroused by the opening of the tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amen's in 1922. Fashion designers sent their scouts to the opening of the tomb to acquire ideas for fabric designs, costume, and jewelry. Many of the wealthy who traveled were inspired to include Egypt in their itinerary.

The chic of classic tailored suits was firmly established by 1923. One was a navy blue twill (Plate XVI, A). The straight lines and double-breasted effect of the jacket were in perfect accord with the severe wrap-around skirt, which opened on the same side as the jacket. Another was a beige covert cloth creation designed by O'Rossen, (Plate XVI, B) who was famous for his perfection of cut and design. His coats were fitted tightly at the waist, but were loose over the hips and had seams in the front. The skirt was severely plain but comfortable for walking.

With the tailored suits, to be chic, one had to wear the cloche hat which was at the height of its popularity. It was especially adapted to the bobbed hair style, which had become quite universal, having been popularized by Irene Castle of dancing fame, who was one of the idols of the young American women. It was thought that the cloche hat might have been inspired by an aviator's helmet.

By 1924 skirts were noticeably shorter. The daytime mode was more than ever simple and straight in line. There were no draperies, but narrow tunics, some long and straight, and some short and flared (Plate XI). In most cases there was no waistline at all, but if it existed it was at the top of the hips.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVI

Tailored suits of 1923

A - Double-breasted suit

B - O'Rossen's close fitting suit

(Vogue 61:57, 1923)



A

B

Premet's famous garconne frock was a gown, not a coat-dress, but was designed to be worn in the street without a coat, so fell into the category of a tailored dress. This costume was completed by a scarf, collar and cuffs, or details of lingerie.

The batteau neckline was gradually being replaced by necklines round, square and pointed; for afternoon many were cut in a deep V. The Eton collar also gained favor because it was especially effective with the bobbed hair, tiny hats and boyish figures.

Accessories became important in 1924, as did the demand for matching the dress, coat, hat, scarf, gloves, shoes, and handbag. Large dressmaking firms began to make false jewels to match model gowns, and to make perfumes to create the desired atmosphere with the lines and colors of these models. Harmony proceeded even further by appearing in make-up, which in the past was used simply to correct the faults of nature, but which now had become an art. Each new costume, each new situation, for which the outfit was worn demanded a special make-up (9, p. 657).

In 1925 Helen Wills sleeveless tennis dress (Plate XVII) put sports clothes on a new level, and introduced the sleeveless dress to the American women. This was a one-piece sports frock, a classic tennis dress which was always in white with such accessories as headbands for coolness, a dress of comfort trimmed with front gathers and diagonal piping. Monograms were used a great deal. It was not a smart fashion, but a very significant one, as these dresses were worn on the street later. The shirtmaker type of

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVII

Sleeveless tennis frock

(Vogue 70:63, 1927)



dress was also introduced and has been in the fashion picture ever since (4, p. 170). The sports costume dominated the wardrobe. Afternoon dresses were almost excluded. The masculine influence in sportswear brought the sweater and skirt with the mannish jacket into vogue. Tunics and jumpers were also worn with skirts having gathered front fullness.

In general the smartest silhouette was youthful, straight, and slim with the flare from the hips or below. Tailored lightweight woolen daytime dresses and suits had a gradual flare which fell back into the slim silhouette in repose. Movement was secured by pleating, gathering, wing-like movements, scarfs, cape-like backs and panels. Molyneux introduced a new double-breasted tailored suit of blue serge (Plate XVIII). The accessories were chosen to create a chic reproduction of the traditional Apache costume. The skirt was short and flared. The coat was short and double-breasted and the outfit was completed by a red Apache scarf and gray hat. The ensemble eclipsed all other styles for daytime wear. A wardrobe composed of evening dresses, the indispensable little black dress with accompanying long coat and the three piece ensemble was adequate for the well-dressed woman.

Since more and more women were entering into business, Vogue gave some guides for the chic business woman as to dress:

Short sleeves do not look well for such wear ever. Elbow-length is permissible, though long sleeves are better, but the really short sleeve is bad form in any office or shop, some people think in town at all for daytime wear, and the sleeveless street gown is unspeakably vulgar. Very short, tight, bright dresses are unsuitable; so are fringes that catch and floating tags of trimming.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVIII

Double-breasted suit with short flared skirt

(Vogue 66:56, 1925)

PLATE XVIII



The sort of occupation pursued by the worker makes a difference, and the official who has to meet outside people in outside places may be more elaborately attired than the writer at her desk, though never, of course, conspicuously. Surroundings, too make a difference. A woman decorator in a place of business furnished like a charming room, might be dressed a little less simple than a woman lawyer in a law office. Indeed, any woman who is working downtown among men may be said to be best dressed when dressed in the very plainest of smart ways. Any man will confirm this.

The trouble with the young office women of the present age, especially the workaday juniors, is that they will adorn themselves with an eye on the social side of life, and for the sake of mid-day or evening engagements are very apt to be ill turned out for their employment. The plainest black crepe de Chine gown with the addition of a fresh scarf, gloves, flower at the waist, and hat perhaps left off entirely, will turn the well-dressed worker into a pleasure seeker quite well enough apparelled for ordinary occasions. Black is always good taste, day or night, in thick or thin fabrics, and if made after simple distinguished models, lasts its owner a long time and is always a good standby. Too much stress cannot be laid on the vogue for simplicity in dress (34, p. 99).

Dresses were so short by 1926 that Vogue gave a few hints to the "kneedy." "First before you go out, sit as well as stand before your full length mirror, if you have one. Study carefully just what positions you can take and what positions you cannot take without increasing the need for censorship. A still wiser precaution is to be seated when you are being fitted. Many a gown that hangs with protecting discretion when the wearer stands, proves unequal to the emergency when she sits down" (36, p. 43).

The flaring silhouette in both restrained and ample form continued, but because of the reaction against this exaggerated silhouette, a straighter silhouette took its place. Cut was still very important. Vionnet introduced the first all bias-cut dress

which revolutionized the fashion picture. The dress had a tendency to sag and was very difficult to copy (Plate XIX, B). Chanel also introduced a bias-cut dress which became as common as the Ford and was worn by everyone.

Chanel designed a costume (Plate XIX, A) which consisted of a jumper dress of beige jersey and checked beige and brown woolen. With it was worn lisle stockings, oxfords, which matched the darker check of the woolen, and gloves which matched the beige. The Rebeaux hat showed the influence of the fashionable high crown. Another Chanel favorite was a knit suit with a cardigan.

To be really smart at this time, the hair was worn either straight or with a slight permanent wave that gave a natural effect. All or part of the ears showed. The hair was brushed back from the forehead. A good bob was a modified masculine hair-cut, and while it lacked elegance, it had a certain distinction and a simplicity that harmonized with the prevailing fashions.

The aim of 1927 was to achieve throughout the mode as much intricacy of cut, design and fabric as could be combined with the effect of uncompromising simplicity. The skirt shrank to its highest point and the waist-line to its lowest. The debutante slouch was still in vogue (Plate XX). Pirate by Goupy, was a two-piece sports frock of crepe de Chine of clear blue and navy blue. It had the bloused waist-line, double belt, a straight skirt of four superimposed panels and the classic neckline with revers.

Women patronized men's shops for silk and linen handkerchiefs,

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIX

Dress for sports and travel and dress for dancing

A - Chanel's jumper dress

B - Vionnet's bias-cut dress

(Vogue 67:54, 1926)

PLATE XIX



A



B

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XX

The debutante slouch

(Vogue 69:59, 1927)



cashmere scarfs, and ringed socks to roll down over stockings. For cold weather sports, they bought practical underwear that consisted of men's silk and wool vests with short elbow sleeves and short pants. Lounging pajamas were highly fashionable and were made of plain materials or printed crepes with contrasting colors.

Scientific exercise was taken in order to obtain the fashionably slim figure (45, p. 371). Starvation diets of lemon juice and lamb chops popularized by movie stars became a habit for all fashionable women, and everyone kept track of her calories.

It was in this year of 1927 that women's fashions reached the extreme of unfemininity. One man, George S. Chappell put it this way:

May a mere male voice a protest against certain tendencies increasingly evidenced by our ladies of today? I refer to the wholesale way in which they are appropriating, not only our habiliments, but also our habits, our mental processes, and our very physical forms. We men sense the looming of sex-extinction.

We have suffered in silence, nursing the somewhat bitter knowledge that it is the man who pays. But the seeds of rebellion are germinating. Sooner or later there will be open revolt. In the first place, in the material item of clothes, they are undoubtedly stealing our stuff. The trousers far from being a figure of speech, have become the speech of her figure for sportswear. From head to foot the conquest is complete. A jaunty felt or tweed hat gives Betty a silhouette that is the counterpart of Billy's. Add a dashing scarf, a shirt and collar of man-nish cut, a sweater from the youth's department, golf stockings, boots, and where lies man's sartorial distinction? And may I tactfully point out that even the more intimate items, such as pajamas, his unique glory has been stolen?

Try to buy a package of cigarettes or a lighter, and, ten to one, it will be seized upon by a female whose need

for it is evidently much greater than your own. So it is with sleeve-links, pins, and cigarette cases. And then there are the barber shops. At the cry of "Next," it is Helene, not Henry, who gets the chair. The bob was bad enough; the boy-cut is the last straw. My wardrobe is a community chest from which disappear waistcoats, ties, handkerchiefs- everything.

Gone are the splendid curves of the "Gay Nineties," the wasp waist and the hour-glass bust. Before our eyes, a new race is being created, straight-figured, lithe-limbed maidens, who, more and more, approximate the contours of her brothers. With this physical development, or lack of it, has come evident changes in the mental make-up of our dear ones. Their speech and mode of thought are manly to such a degree that the expression, "a womanly woman," is already a term of reproach. Girls are no longer mere typists or secretaries. They are bank managers, members of Congress and Governors.

I am seriously worried about this whole matter. Remember that our women have exercised their prerogatives for a comparatively short time. Having already ousted man from his shops, clubs, smoking-cars, offices, and dressing rooms, there is no telling where they will stop, if they ever do stop (Vogue, 37, p. 45).

In 1928 the pendulum began swinging in the opposite direction. A feminine touch was evident in ruffles, draperies, bows, soft necklines, cascades, jabots, and flying panels. Princess lines were good in coats. Even the tailored suit had a feminine aspect and there were new variations of the scarf and cape themes; for instance Paquin showed a short rounded cape and a fitted waistline in one of his suits (Plate XXI, B). These two smart details on the dark blue rep suit introduced femininity into the silhouette of the once severe tailored mode. The blouse was of mauve pink moire. Madame Regny's "Fan Tan La Tulipe" was a slightly more tailored suit (Plate XXI,A), which combined a sweater striped in very narrow navy-blue, red, and white lines with a

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXI

Sweater and skirt and tailored suit
with a feminine aspect of 1928

A - Madame Regny's "Fan Tan La Tulipe" suit

B - Paquin's suit with cape

(Vogue 72:51, 1928)

(Vogue 71:63, 1928)

PLATE XXI



A



B

EMC

jacket suit of navy-blue ondemoussa. The skirt had a circular cut that flared gracefully below the snug hip-yoke. The woolen flower, the buttons, and the woolen belt repeated the colors of the ensemble.

The fashions of 1929 were a continuation of the trend that had started in 1928. Patou caused great confusion with the high waist-line, but a low waistline soon became passe. What looked young last year, looked old this spring because longer full skirts and a higher waist-line had been used so perfectly that they looked smart and becoming. There was a new and less narrow way of being young and slim. There was a new length of line, in fact, two new lengths, lengths of bodice and length of skirt. Never had there been so much cut in design. Every type of dress was more intricate than it looked, and line and pattern of fabric were used for all they were worth. The new fashions did not lend themselves to quantity production; they took expert dressmaking to be made and fitted. There were fewer actual sport clothes, and more clothes for general wear that were based on the one or two-piece dress with jumper, cardigan, jacket, and three-quarter length coat (42, p. 37). A light coat of Paquin's (Plate XXII, A) was worn over a dark frock, in this case, a black crepe dress with a beige cloth coat was trimmed with black Persian lamb - the coat hemline was uneven. Another was a seven-eighths length coat (Plate XXII, B) which was a tweed in an oatmeal design in yellow, beige and brown. The blouse was of yellow crepe. The smart reversal of color was used in a long chartreuse coat and a black

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXII

Three coat lengths of 1929

A - Paquin's light coat

B - Seven-eighths length coat
by Louiseboulanger

C - Reversal of color with
long coat

(Vogue 73:69, 1929)

PLATE XXII



A

B

C

and chartreuse-green printed crepe dress (Plate XXII,C).

The smart woman's wardrobe included some version of the softly casual dressmaker's suit. Its chief characteristic was the absence of hard tailored lines. One suit and dress combination (Plate XXIII, A) was of light gray-blue wool, in which the feminine touch was added by the cape and the turban which were fashioned of the same material. A more tailored mode, but still using the fabric hat idea of the costume, was Worth's "Tres Vite" (Plate XXIII,B), a two-piece ensemble. It was made of mixed woolen in black and gray, with matching hat. The scarf collar of the three-quarter length jacket was tied with short ends, and the skirt had a deep hip-yoke that gave a becoming snugly fitted line.

Now the sleeveless dress was worn openly on the streets. The blouse was no longer a man's tailored shirt blouse, but a lovely soft blouse. Skirts could be found circular, straight, or pleated. Many had uneven hemlines or flying panels, which were added in an effort to pull the hemline down. One of the newer necklines was shown in a gown of Paquin's (Plate XXIV). It had a deep V neckline in back trimmed with a bow. The skirt showed an uneven hemline which almost touched the floor in back.

By 1930 the revolution in fashion was complete. Epitomizing the feminizing influence which entered the fashion picture in the 1930's, was a creation of Hattie Carnegie's (Plate XXV). It was a sleeveless, low-neck evening dress of white organdy, whose ruffles, tucks, and flowers were reminiscent of the "Infanta" of a more romantic period.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXIII

Softly tailored suit and tweed ensemble of 1929

A - Suit and dress combination with feminine touch

B - "Tres Vite", two-piece ensemble

(Vogue 73:57, 1929)

(Vogue 74:56, 1929)

PLATE XXIII



A



B

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXIV

Gown with dipping hemline of 1929

(Vogue 73:48, 1929)



EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXV

Feminine gown of 1930

(Vogue 75:44, 1930)



SUMMARY

During the period preceding World War I all of the old ideas of social betterment were brought forth- temperance, prohibition, international peace, equality of negroes, the well being of farmers and factory workers and women's rights. These ideas found expression in lobbying activities, books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, lectures, and speeches. The growing interest in social improvement reflected changing social and economic conditions.

The progress and restlessness of the period were reflected in the feminine fashions of the times. By 1910 a fundamental change had taken place in the silhouette. The unnatural S-shaped silhouette of the previous decade gave way to a straight figure which was more in keeping with the laws of health and hygiene. The restlessness expressed itself in the hodge podge of curious designs which appeared at this time.

War in Europe brought wealth to America and the rise of general prosperity was naturally reflected in dress. With the entering of America into the war, however, fashion became insignificant. Patriotism filled everyone with a desire to save the world for democracy. More and more, women were needed to replace men and they took jobs as nurses, stretcher bearers, ambulance drivers, workers in munition plants, factory hands and the like. Clothes adapted themselves to a wartime schedule. They became more economical and simple and reflected the influence of the soldier's uniform in the use of braid, stars, stripes, etc.

Some of the wartime jobs taken by women required a special uniform, others a semi-uniform or a simple one-piece dress. Playtime dresses, however, were the gayest that could be found to counteract the morbid spirit of a war torn world.

With the close of the war the feeling of restlessness, which had already existed before the war, increased. The old order was changing. England had lost her supremacy and America was not yet ready to step in and take her place, nor was she ready to ratify a League of Nations.

This age has sometimes been characterized as the age of the "roaring twenties" or the age of "flaming youth." It was a neurotic period such as usually follows a war. But the attitude of the younger generation was not wholly caused by the war. The causes might be traced as far back as Darwin in 1860, and included the doctrines of Freud concerning sex, which reached America in 1910. Conversation, books and the theater were very frank. Divorces were becoming more customary, and women knew that they no longer had to marry if they wished to stay single and work. They could be casual "free" companions of the tired, disillusioned men who had returned from the war. With the passing of the nineteenth amendment, they felt that they were completely equal with men. To be marked also, was women's growing independence of household drudgeries, due to labor-saving devices and commercially prepared foods. Women took new jobs which brought about a feeling of comparative independence and a slackening of husbandly and parental authority. Other forces which brought about the revolution in

manners and morals were entirely American. These were prohibition, confession and sex magazines, the automobile, and the movies.

The fashion figure produced in this era was most unfeminine and has often been called the most hideous of all time. It reached its culmination in 1927 when the waist-line was at the hips, and the skirts were above the knees, the hair was shorn, the breasts were flattened, and the figure was slimmed by rigid dieting. Man's revolt against this unfeminine creature was expressed by one male of the period as follows - "May a mere male voice a protest against certain tendencies increasingly evidenced in our ladies today? I refer to the wholesale way in which they are appropriating not only our habiliments, but also our habits, our mental processes, and our very physical forms. We men sense the looming of sex extinction."

It takes time to build a new code when the prevailing one has been completely destroyed as was the case following the first world war. Near the end of the twenties the revolutionists were learning to be at home in the world, to rid themselves of obsession with sex, and to discover a new and enduring set of values and satisfactions. Women began to revolt against the masculinity of manners and attire. They realized that they could be free and feminine at the same time. Hence, began a new era of the re-feminizing of dress which has culminated in our present fashions.

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