

# THE IOWA HOMEMAKER

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## The Eternal Subject

Isabel Leith

Since Eve wandered out of Paradise attired in a garment of fig-leaves, women's apparel has been the cause of much comment by the members of both sexes. According to Teufelsdröck, the first purpose of clothes was ornament. After man's pains of hunger and desire for revenge were satisfied, his next care was not comfort, but decoration or adornment. Clothes did not hold the important place that they hold today; a string of beads, a pattern tattooed or painted, a flower in the hair and he was dressed. The Indian would probably stay naked rather than part with his feathers and beads. Desire for beauty is said to be the basis of every passing fashion of the savage, of the barbarian and of civilized man. Modern dress seems to change because of the desire for something new and more satisfying aesthetically than the old.

With the development of civilization, the waist-belt of feathers, bones, or other trophies gradually became the apron, and later was transformed into the skirt. After the development of the art of weaving, garments were made to cover the whole body. In southern countries long loose garments were adopted, but in the more severe climates where the loose tunic and mantle were not enough to keep them warm, close fitting garments were worn and the legs were wrapped in cloth or skins. Though trousers are perhaps of oriental origin, they finally became established as the type of men's dress, while the dress with the long skirt became the conventional dress for the women.

Through various periods down to the present, dress has changed from one extreme to another. All types of garments have been worn, from the graceful flowing lines of the Greek dress which followed the lines of the figure to the corseted figure with the wasp-like waist, and from the simple flowing garments of the middle ages to the drum-shaped crinoline frocks of the sixteenth century.



"A creation of 1847."

Not only has the type of dress changed, but also the shape of the figure.

There have been efforts to restrict woman's dress. Many sumptuary laws have been passed, but seldom enforced, telling what one could, and what one could not wear. In Greece the women are forbidden to wear pins to hold their garments together on the arms and along the sides of the dress. In the sixth century B. C. no more than three garments could be worn. In the sixteenth century scarlet could be worn only by those of high rank in the nobility. Marie de Medici required that her ladies-in-waiting must not have a waist larger than 15 inches. Old English laws regulated the length of garments and the kind of materials that might be used. The serving men and women were restricted to short skirts, while only the graduates of universities, knights and others of nobility, could wear their skirts long. In the seventeenth century no lady could be present in court unless she wore a corset. In this country in the early days, Massachusetts taxed the women for ela-

borateness in dress, when they attended large public gatherings. The Quakers by restriction of their organization were also forbidden extravagance and gay colors. Their costume was therefore of plain somber colored homespun in browns, grays and blacks. Another Massachusetts law prevented the importing of lace and ribbons for decoration and elaborateness in the costume. More recently attempts have been made to pass legislation restricting the length of skirts. A few years ago regulations were enforced at public bathing beaches to prevent anyone on the beach with a bathing suit shorter than a specified length and to see that hose were worn. A modern restriction on dress appeared when a college president forbade students from going without hose on the campus. These laws and regulations have been designed to direct what women should wear, but such laws have not always been effective, for the modern restrictions seem to be made not on what is worn, but on what is not worn.

Woman's dress has until very recent years dragged on the ground. It is only very recently that they have been worn even at ankle length. Early in the nineteenth century the dress of classic simplicity held sway. It followed the lines of the body and was graceful. In 1837, Queen Victoria introduced an era of fancy work and of sentiment, which was felt throughout the world. For stout Victoria's sake the body was hidden beneath puffings, and paddings and remained thus till the end of the century.

Beneath the voluminous skirt, three petticoats were worn, one of flannel, one of heavy moire, and one of stiff and rustling silk or starched muslin. Next to the body a woollen encasement was worn with a stiff corset of whalebone and steel which held with a vice-like grip. The most fashionable people were always ailing. Anemia was the vogue, and the lady marked her illnesses by her swoon-

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### The Eternal Subject

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ings, which were not infrequent when she was in the grip of the whalebone.

One of the first women who advocated changing to a simpler and more practical dress was Amelia Jenks Bloomer, who was also a women's rights advocate. She was born at Homer, New York, in 1818. In 1849, she took up dress reform, and designed and wore a short skirt over loose trousers gathered around the ankles. The name of "bloomers" became attached to these, and to any divided skirt or knickerbocker dress for women. Till her death in 1894, she took a prominent part in temperance campaigns and in woman's suffrage, but little resulted from her efforts at reform of dress. She was considered peculiar by many, because of her "daring" dress. It is to be regretted that people of that day could not see the present fashion in dress.

In the '70's, the fullness of the skirt was drawn to the back, and the bustle was worn to make fullness more accented and to extend the figure. This was followed by various extremes of long, wide, heavy skirts and ugly fashions.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were many changes in fashion. The fashion changed so often during this time that it kept everyone gasping for breath to keep up.

First the ruffled, flounced, braided and stitched bell-shape skirt, the leg-of-mutton sleeve and the high necked bodice were worn. Then came the large double-puff sleeves, the pompadours, and picture hats with ostrich and ribbon—perched jauntily on one side of the head. 1903 featured the pancake hat, the train dress and the straight front corset. In 1904 women caught their breath for a time, for there was no radical change, but later came the separate skirt and blouse with gores and pleats substituted for the flounce and ruffles. Then came the Gibson Girl, America's only real contribution to fashion, the stiff starched white skirt and elbow sleeves and blouse with red ribbons. Over-hanging shoulder lines were seen in 1908. The skirts were one inch above the ground. Puffing and padding came off and after seventy years, the female form could be discerned. A tailored mode was very evident.

With the debut of the motor car an inane number of feminine motor caps, hats, veils, goggles, gauntlets and capes appeared. Women swathed themselves for protection against exposure to the wind and dust.

With the slit skirt in 1914, the feminine leg made its first unblushing appearance in modern times, and in 1915 and 1916, the skirts gradually began to rise from the floor. In 1917, the silhouette was slim and the skirts shorter, but

fully to the ankle. Fashion was on the verge of becoming unladylike. The skirt was still shorter in 1921.

For some time the manufacturers of clothing and dictators of fashion were fearing that there were not enough changes being made to stimulate business, so every available means was used to change the style back to the elaborate dress of earlier days which would make a new demand for their goods. After an intensive campaign it was brought about. Skirts dropped to the ground and drapings of all kinds were used.

In 1923 there was a change to shorter, simpler garments because the dresses of 1922 were no longer practical for the activities which women had undertaken. The new dress showed the dawn of a more stable fashion. For the first time it was youthful, and the bobbed hair helped to make this fashion permanent. The use of dark dresses, light collars and cuffs, and small felt hats was universal. Everyone was boyish and submerged their individualities for these reasons. Chivalry fell off, so it was necessary to make the dress more feminine. Side flares, bows, tiered skirts and light hose were used, without much change in the silhouette.

From 1900 to 1923 there were very decided changes in fashion. Now the changes are more subtle. We have illusions of change. The fashions are more or less stable, but we must have newness and variety for we do not want them to become the dull and universal costume adopted by the men. New fabrics, new and differently named colors come each year. The same shade of blue may be Harding blue one year and New blue the next, only the name lends the charm. The hatpin industry has vanished. The same hat comes each year with a different decoration, simple and tailored.

The corset and corset cover are gone—along with the long-sleeved and long-legged union suit and the ruffled petticoat. These are replaced by one silk garment, the chemise or two pieces, the bloomers and brassiere, with the dress on top.

The rate of fashion change seems actually slowed down. The woman who really wants to wear her clothes more than one season can do so. All she needs is new accessories. The flounces that appeared two years ago are still good. Diagonal tucking and seaming on coats and frocks is similar to that of two years ago. Fashion so far as variety is concerned is desirable, for it has given picturesqueness and color in the past, and has relieved the dullness of the everyday world, but we have learned to attain this same end in a much better way than was done by our ancestors.

One writer still says that until Paris decrees a return to the garb of modesty, the labor of church and reformers will

be in vain. No reformation of the past has met with success which has not moved along the line of fashion. The present-day styles seem to give us a convenient,

comfortable, hygienic, economical dress. If we can keep from going to the extreme with short skirts and few garments perhaps we can be satisfied to retain what is best of this fashion and never return to the extremes of former days.

"Education—a debt due from present to future generations."—George Peabody.

"Dot, where did you get that stunning formal?"

"At the

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**Club News**

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the sticks firmly into the cores of the apples, turn them around quickly in the hot syrup several times and then in a bowl of ice water. Place the apples on a rack or stick them in a paste board box. If everything is ready before you start dipping the apples, it is possible to work very rapidly.

We hope these suggestion will help you in your money-making efforts and wish you much success in using these or any others which you may have.

**Give Tea**

The faculty members of the Home Economics Division gave a tea for the extension group, who were in conference at Iowa State April 8 and 10. The tea was held in the fire-place room.

"Lost yesterday—somewhere between sunrise and sunset—two golden hours were lost, each set with sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered for they are gone forever."—Horace Mann.

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