

Like the Woman?

One of the sweetest uses of business adversity has been the change from "pity the poor working girl" to "envy the woman with a pocketbook of her own." And clothes have played a stellar role in turning the trick. One of the stock reasons given by men for opposing the entrance of women into business was that they would lose their charm. The moment, therefore, that the first business woman proved that she could look as lovely in proper office apparel as in drawing room best bib and tucker, she had struck a blow for her sex. Leisure women patronized the business girl, but when the careerists began to emerge in smart attire, the marabou slipper was on the other foot. Pity went out, envy came in, and the business woman became an object of respect.

Recently a prominent professional woman made a speech, a good speech. I, who watched her from the press table, thought it an excellent speech. But when a number of persons ignored the speech and talked about how well the speaker wore her clothes, was that a cause for complaint? Not at all. Her brains had not been insulted. She must have some or she would not be where she is. But her grooming—ah, that is another story. When her clothes stood such favorable comparison with those of the leisure women surrounding her, that was a case for praise.

Clothes are important to all women, especially to those in business. A little while ago I was asked to see a girl who was depressed over the outlook in her job. She was being discriminated against, said the friend who asked me to see her. Could I do something about it? Certainly I would try.

The girl came to see me. It was instantly evident that she was being discriminated against, but by herself. Her hat had been bought with no idea of the intimate relationship it was to bear to her coat. Her coat was the wrong color for her dress. And her dress was size sixteen, a perfect fit above the waist but a good four inches too short for her long legs. She looked uncertain of herself, hesitant, gawky, inexperienced. She wanted a position in which she would have to meet the public—but her male superiors would not give it to her.

She was a perfect subject for



Drawings
by
A. J. Moore

Skinner's Dress Suit, that little volume which tells of the transformation of meek, meeching Mr. Skinner when he wears his first dress suit. A case of rabbit into man.

No, I would not buy more textbooks or take more technical courses, I told her. I would read *Skinner's Dress Suit*. I would buy myself some new clothes, not expensive clothes, but clothes chosen for their dignity and harmony and suitability. Then I would see if the men in my office discriminated against the woman I had become as much as they had against the woman I was.

For, and this is the crux of the situation, clothes are an expression of personality, of taste, of mental attitude, of character. They do not mask individuality. They reveal it. They are the window dressing in the shop, the makeup of the magazine, the paint on the house, attracting attention to the worthwhileness within.

We live in a changing world, a moving world. It takes rare genius to be an individualist, and the casual observer is apt to think that the "old fashioned" woman who does not change with the times is stubborn, inflexible, angular, resistant, or unob-servant, egocentric, out of step.

Which does not mean that women can not wear long hair in a bobbed-headed world. They can and many of them do it well. Many others would look better if a scissors snipped off a

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--are now devoted to shopping. The ranks of well-dressed American women have added a recruit

By
**Marjorie
Shuler**

Yet dressing well has helped to transform the business woman from an object of pity to an object of envy. Miss Shuler points out. "Clothes are an expression of personality, of taste, of mental attitudes, of character. They do not mask individuality. They reveal it."

Miss Shuler Views Clothes and the Woman

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few rolls of the silly curls. But the woman who is "different" must look so much better in the way of her choosing that she justifies her difference.

Women are beginning to realize this and that is why they flock to style shows and fashion talks. They have learned Latin which they never use and geometry which was only a bother to them, no matter how useful both subjects may have been in developing their youthful thinking, but the schools of the past have given inadequate training on clothes, the beauty box, and poise. So women feel that they must make up for their lack by a burst of adult education now.

There always will be some women with natural born clothes sense. The rest of us can not legislate any prohibition on their use of their knowledge. So it behooves us to be up and doing, no matter how painful the process, as I decided when I learned two-finger typewriting.

Men and other women will continue to be impressed by good grooming. We can not reform their reactions. So any change must take place within ourselves. Our good dispositions may not always show but our outmoded petticoats are certain to do so. And there will be many times when our certificates of ability are not close at hand and it will matter tremendously that we convince the boss—or the client, or the customer—that we are so competent with our personal affairs that we may safely be trusted with his.

It is not the money we spend but the ability with which we spend it. It is not the time we consume but the intelligence we utilize. No woman needs to squander more of her budget or her time than she can well afford, but she needs to buy with taste and discrimination and a view of her whole wardrobe in her mind, not just the beguiling color of the bargain before her.

As Dora Miller once remarked, "Sloppy clothes or a disorganized wardrobe indicate sloppy and disorganized thinking, and to have the right clothes at hand is a distinct time-saver."

And Dora Miller, while today an outstanding fashion writer and European representative of the Lace League of America, comes from Sac City, Iowa, a town of 2,500 inhabitants. She knows about limited budgets.

"Women," says Miss Miller, "have to chose their clothes carefully just as men have to select their neckties, or press their suits, or refrain from wearing sports shirts with tuxedos."

Or take Helen Cookman, labeled "America's best tailor," whose coats are begin-

ning to make quite a dent in the fashion world, and who says "the only really expensive clothes are those bought in quantity because they are cheap and discarded after a few wearings. The business woman is less apt than the leisure woman to waste her money like that. She gets one good thing and wears it steadily, always conscious that she is well-dressed."

Then there is Lyolene, an outstanding designer in Paris who has been for eighteen months in the Midwest learning all about American women. She believes that they dress well, but she cautions against striking buttons which make the wearer look fatter, and says, "Don't buy because a thing is the style; you will meet it half-a-dozen times a day. Have the courage to be different—which means normal, not queer. Simplify a dress by removing its ornate trimmings as does the Frenchwoman, and seek your own color."

In other words, pay for your purchases with thought as well as with time and money—good advice even if it does come from women whose business it is to market fashions.

I am quite sure that my grandmother used no rouge or lipstick or red nail polish. I doubt if she creamed her face at night. But my grandmother had tremendous physical activity in a comparatively clean world. She never rode in a subway, or handled a typewriter, or crossed the continent by train with no air conditioning. But my grandmother had a beauty vice, if it must be termed that. Every night she shook up a bottle of liquid and applied it to her face. It was labeled "Bloom of Youth."

My grandmother crimped her hair carefully, too, every night. It was hard to get those pins in just right, but how she did love the admiration she won. That is why I am sure she would be having permanents if she were here today. As I remember the delicious vanity of my grandmother, along with her deep religion and extraordinary gentleness, as I think of her ability and her capacities, I am confident that she would have loved to climb down from that back shelf where she and her black silk dress were practically relegated when she was forty and go to football games in pastel tweeds. Or, what is more to the point, she would have loved to earn money in the business field, instead of counting her slender pennies over and over again.

In the yesterdays when women reporters first began to work for city desks on New York newspapers the pattern of their behavior was set for them by the dean of them all. No evening dresses on the job, girls, she counseled, and the "girls" obeyed her. For years they ate at banquets where every one else wore dinner clothes, even the waiters.

One day they began to realize that they were doing important jobs and that it was important to those jobs that they should

appear as suitably dressed as the women around them.

Look through Ishbel Ross' *Ladies of the Press* for the results. When Imogene Stanley was assigned to interview the Prince of Wales, now King Edward of England, she got her quotes because her evening dress attracted his eye and he danced with her—and then danced some more.

When Grace Robinson had to write about that same famous personage she was admitted to a reception because her frock convinced the butler that she was an invited guest. These and other reporters got their material partly on their looks, however ably their minds may have functioned afterward in writing it.

That is, they made their clothes work for them, which is the important thing—not to be a slave to one's wardrobe, but to make one's grooming do its part in combination with intelligence, ability and inner niceties, so that clothes plus the woman attain their objective.

EVERYTHING A WOMAN WANTS in a position

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