

SHE DESIGNS DRESSES

IT was one of those exclusive frock shops with one gorgeous gown and a pot plant in the window. All the rest were carefully shrouded from the casual glance. I was ushered into a fitting room. I am prejudiced against fitting rooms. They always recall those dreadful moments, first when you are being measured for a new outfit and the dressmaker tells you you're half an inch extra everywhere, and after that the first fitting and your dismay at finding that any garment could make you look so—so solid.

A typical fitting room with a saucer of pins, a wicker table and a fashion magazine. Fashion sketches on the walls. Women as mythical as Atalanta, six feet tall, with 18-inch waists and incredibly long legs. But before the sense of my own physical shortcomings had had time to grow to uncomfortable proportions the curtain was pushed up and a young woman came into the room.



"Black braided suit, dark gold hair swept up from a broad forehead, and an epic way of moving."

We sat down.

"Do you design all the frocks here?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Where does your inspiration come from?"

Help From The Films

"Mostly out of my own head, I suppose. Or from just wandering about noticing people and staring in shop windows. I never, or very seldom, get ideas from fashion books. The films are quite often a help. I don't consciously copy frocks from those worn by stars, but often a film will evoke a particular kind of atmosphere which can be reflected in a frock. This is particularly true of costume films. I designed several rather youthful *Gone With The Wind* evening frocks, and I expect that *Lady Hamilton* will be responsible for her share of 'confections'."

"I suppose you prefer designing evening frocks?"

"Yes, there's much more scope. You can let your imagination run away with you. An evening frock can be delightfully and irresponsibly crazy, whereas a street frock must express some degree of usefulness and responsibility."

"What was your favourite frock?"

Unconventional Decoration

"I think my favourite was a black crepe evening frock with puff sleeves, a heart-shaped neckline and a circular skirt. That sounds rather conventional, doesn't it? But all round the bottom of the skirt and round the neck-line it was appliquéd with that heavy canvas blind embroidery. It looked most effective, and I felt so pleased with myself for hitting upon such an unconventional decoration. That's one of my greatest thrills, I think, getting inspiration from things like furnishing fabrics, and using materials that haven't previously been used for frocks."

"It must be rather satisfying to go to a dance and be able to say 'Ah, that's mine,' when you see a particularly attractive frock whirling past."

"Yes, it is. It gives you a wonderful sense of achievement. I've often thought of going in for pure art, but admittedly I wouldn't be able to see as many of my creations put to practical and decorative use as I do now."

"Have you ever had to see a frock you were fond of being worn by the 'wrong person'?"

"Not yet, but there's always that possibility. I know I'd loathe it. If I were selling frocks and a customer wanted a dress that did not suit her, I would try to dissuade her."

"Do you think short evening frocks will ever come back? Do you remember how frightful it was when the short evening frock started to merge into the long evening frock by going down at the side and back?"

"No, I think that for formal wear evening frocks will always remain long. But during the war at any rate there will be fewer formal functions, and so there will be a demand for short frocks for informal dances. You know the kind of thing—something plain but dashing. A black crepe frock with a sequin pocket, for instance. Or one of those brilliant wool florals. And with these short frocks some sort of cap or turban will be worn."

"Do you think day frocks will stay as short as they are at present?"

"Yes, at least till the end of the war. Since the fall of Paris, London has become the style centre of the world, and all the big houses there are sponsoring short frocks as a war economy measure. They have come to stay."

Skirts Versus Slacks

"I'm glad. Do you remember 1936? It isn't so very long ago, and yet we wore our day frocks almost down to our ankles. And what about slacks? Do you think they'll have any future? Katherine Hepburn wore them rather dashingly in *Philadelphia Story*."

"I thought she looked far too thin in them. They weren't at all becoming. That's the trouble, you see. They really are difficult to wear even if you're thin. And if you have a typically feminine figure they're quite out of the question. I remember reading somewhere—I suppose it was by Ogden Nash—'*Oh fat white woman whom nobody smacks,*'"

Why do you walk through the streets in slacks?'"

I think that slacks will be confined as at present to house and sports wear, and then their only justification will be utility, not beauty. I don't think they'll ever challenge the supremacy of the skirt."

"I'm glad to hear it. Skirts are much easier to make. But I suppose all dress-making is child's play to you?"

"No. I can't sew at all. All I do is to select my materials, make a quick sketch of what I want, and then watch the dressmaker cut it out and make it up. Most designers of course do their own making. I'm afraid I'm not very competent."

I wandered out into the shop. Inside these curtained recesses hung frocks,

dozens upon dozens of frocks. Each had a personality. And each derived its personality from this golden-haired girl. It would be as incongruous for her to have to attend to details of button-sewing and French-seaming as it would be for a modern artist to mix his pigments.

We paused for a moment at the door, watching the flitting crowds. "Where are you going?" I asked.

"In search of inspiration," she replied.

The crowd swallowed her up.

Recipes For Cottage Cheese

Milk: 1 quart.

Rennet: 1 teaspoon.

Method: Start to prepare on the day before or on the morning of the day when it is to be used. Set the milk with rennet till it has curdled. Cut in cubes and leave on the rack, covered, until the curd shrinks and the whey separates out. Strain through a muslin until it ceases to drip. It may be left to drip over night. Next day press till all the whey is removed. Season.

(The whey may be kept for making Carrot Whey Fluff as below.)

Mix with chopped nuts or with chopped chives and serve on lettuce, with salad dressing if desired.

ALTERNATIVE RECIPE

Soured milk may be used. Allow the milk to stand in a warm place, e.g., in the cupboard over the hot water cylinder. Leave until the curd begins to separate from the whey. Strain through muslin as in the previous recipe. A little of this, mixed with chives and spread on bread and butter is liked by those who appreciate the slightly acid flavour.

CARROT WHEY FLUFF

Whey—2 cups (use whey from first of the above recipes).

Sugar— $\frac{3}{4}$ cup.

Egg—1.

Carrot—6 ozs. (or 1 cup grated).

Gelatine—2 tablespoons.

Method: Soak gelatine in half a cup of cold water. Heat over hot water until dissolved. Add to whey and sugar. Cool. When beginning to thicken, beat and add lemon and carrot. Fold in stiffly beaten egg white and pile in dishes. Serve with custard sauce made from the egg yolk. (From "Good Nutrition.")



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THE following talks on "Cooking By Gas" will be given by Miss Joyce Ainge from 4YA on Fridays at 10 a.m.:
August 15: "Understanding Your Cooker"
August 22: "What your Regulo means to you."
August 29: "Cleaning and Care of a Gas Cooker."
September 5: "Causes and Remedies of Cooking Troubles."
September 12: "The Use of a Gas Griller."
September 19: "Casserole Cooking."
September 26: "Oven-cooked Meals."