

LONDON AND NEW YORK BECOME WORLD'S FASHION CENTRES

SINCE Paris fell her mantle has descended upon London, and London, according to English designers, is now the fashion centre of the world. English designers therefore, balked at home by the system of clothes rationing, are concentrating their attention upon the market of the Americas. Those romantic and completely impractical tulle-and-sequin evening creations are apparently finding a ready market among wives of South American coffee kings, but in the United States the chief demand is for English tweeds. Tweed jackets with elbow length sleeves are featured by one fashion designer, and each suit is completed by its own long stocking-knitted gloves, with suede palms, which draw up over the elbows. Most English suits for the new season show pockets of interesting shapes, usually double ones. As there is a shortage of fasteners, many frocks and suits have bodices laced up in contrasting colours. And the shortage of felt or straw for hat-making has resulted in most suits and frocks shown by English fashion houses being accompanied by hats of the same material.

Meanwhile, according to the news magazine *Time*, American designers have been getting busy, and recently unveiled for the first time the American-woman-packaged-in-the-United States. This packaging differs from Parisian packaging in several respects.

It is not so dramatic. Every Paris collection had some spectacular clothes that

were bought only by exhibitionists, but which made headlines. American designers are presenting good wearable saleable clothes, but little for exhibitionists or oglers.

Last year's Manhattan openings, following soon after the demise of Paris, tried to establish New York as the fashion centre of the world, but the

luxurious fabrics were French and the clothes were admittedly Paris-inspired. This year the fabrics (good and traditional) are American-made. And the designers have had to depend on their own ingenuity.

Ingenious Touches

This ingenuity shows itself chiefly in slender skirts with slits or "back droops" which fall much lower behind than in front; front peplums to give fullness to tight skirts; the "deep armhole cut" and "soft shoulder" (see illustration).

Highlights from the latest collections of leading designers are:

Fishtail hem lines on daytime dresses.

Slim, slit skirts with back dip, rounded shoulders, deeper armholes.

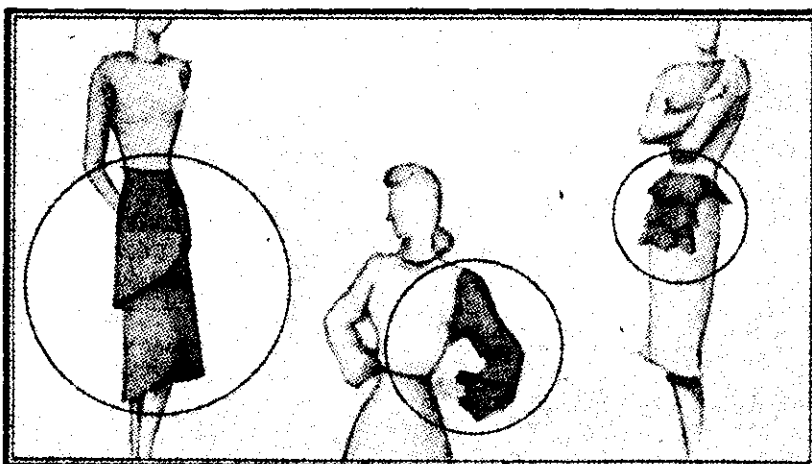
Pre-1914 tendencies with silhouettes narrowing at the bottom, peg-top evening skirts, slim skirts slit to the knee, and general up-in-front, down-in-back movement.

Men's tie silk for formal dinner gowns; men's sleeve lining for suit blouses.

Elizabethan touches in the form of high standing collars on evening gowns, capes, daytime suits.

Near East inspiration, with them harem skirts and tent-pole silhouettes.

Net impression of the showings is that this season's American-designed clothes are not much different from the best clothes of yesterday, have no new magic. On their first real test, U.S. designers pass, but get no "A" for originality.



"Time" drawing by Polly Sell

Tales For The Times (II.)

She Wanted To Be A Policewoman

WHEN Mildred was born she weighed nine pounds, and all the nurses gathered round and said, "What a fine healthy baby!" Mildred, however, did not allow herself to be unduly complacent in the face of so much approval, but with due regard to the wishes of Sir Truby King doubled her weight in six months. She was in fact a model baby and yelled only when her mother inadvertently left a safety pin open in her underwear.

At the age of five Mildred went to kindergarten. She could have gone at the age of four, but her mother found her so useful in the house that she was reluctant to part with her. From her first day at school Mildred showed a capacity for leadership which she never afterwards lost. It was she who instituted the practice at morning milk of passing all the glasses to the end of the table before stacking them on the tray, whereas before the individual child had been expected to walk to the end of the table with his glass.

To the superintendent's deep regret, Mildred left kindergarten for primary school at the age of six. At twelve she gained her competency certificate and

prepared to enter the local High School. When the headmistress asked her what she wanted to be Mildred replied: "I want to be a policewoman." The headmistress sighed and put Mildred into a non-Latin form.

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AT school Mildred had a distinguished career. In her sixth year she was Head Girl and captain of the hockey team, the cricket team, and the Ludo Club. She would have been made captain of the basketball team if the sports mistress hadn't thought it would look like favouritism. The staff were enthusiastic about her. "Mildred is so keen," said the Games Mistress. "Such a power for good," sighed the Head Mistress. Admittedly her scholastic attainments were not brilliant. But one can't have everything, and though Mildred might not know the difference between a participle and a gerund she always knew the difference between right and wrong, a difference to the discovery of which many wise men have devoted a lifetime.

Mildred's muscles inclined her, on leaving school, to enter the Training College, where she underwent a course as Physical Training Instructress. At 21 she was appointed to a district high school, and here she spent seven years in work of immeasurable value to the community.

BUT it must not be thought that all this time Mildred was forgetting her Purpose in Life. Hidden in her bottom drawer was an interleaved notebook in which were carefully pasted all the newspaper items which heralded the formation of a Women's Police Force in New Zealand. In her bookcase stood an impressive row of bound volumes of the *Police Gazette*, and all the works of Dorothy Sayers. Above her bed hung a life-size portrait of Commandant Mary Allen. In her wardrobe reposed a pair of neat black lace-up shoes, still unfortunately a size too big, waiting for the day when Mildred would assume them for the fateful interview with the Commissioner of Police. . . .

Then after years of patient waiting on the part of Mildred and many other women throughout the Dominion a small notice appeared in the daily papers asking for applications from women desirous of joining the Police Force. Mildred filled in the requisite six printed forms and waited. . . .

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MILDRED's application was received with unrestrained delight at Headquarters. "The ideal type," was the general comment. A day and hour were fixed for an interview.

Mildred hid her beating heart beneath a coat of navy serge, and with trembling fingers tied the laces of her size seven and a-half. She presented herself at the office at one minute before the hour.

Her name was announced. She entered. The smile of welcome wiped itself from the Commissioner's face.

"Please sit down," he murmured, sadly.

He explained. Mildred was quite unsuitable. "If you had only looked like a drum majorette or a theatre usher or a head tester or even an art union ticket seller, we might have been able to find a place for you. But as it is—" his eye travelled the five feet ten inches from the well-polished toes of Mildred's sensible shoes to the crown of her classically severe navy felt—"it's quite out of the question. You see, we are proposing to attach our policewomen to the Detective branch of the Force, and we couldn't possibly enrol in the Detective Force anyone who looked as much like a police-woman as you do."

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TWO stalwart policemen assisted

Mildred's sob-shaken form from the room. But her customary firmness of character did not desert her in this crisis. Forsaking conventional paths, she applied for and obtained a position as chucker-out at an exclusive night-club.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner had decided that it was shameful that so splendid and typical a specimen of young New Zealand womanhood should not be made the fullest use of, and he arranged with the authorities that Mildred should go overseas with the next batch of W.W.S.A.'s. But by the time she received the official notification, Mildred was married to the night-club proprietor, and was too busy being happy ever after to do anything about it.

—M.B.