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A TALE FOR THE TIMES

Concerning CLARA Who Was Not Clothes-Conscious

CLARA was an only child, which most psychologists agree is rather dangerous, and certainly when Clara grew up she completely disregarded both Environment and Heredity and showed evidences of Individuality instead. For though both Clara's parents were extremely clothes-conscious themselves and had done their best to foster a similar attitude in their offspring, Clara remained obstinately unseduced by sartorial lures, and if Clara's mother ever suggested wistfully that Clara might like a fur coat for her birthday, Clara would always demand the money instead and spend it on something completely unsuitable like a new motor-bike.

And it was all very difficult to understand because from her earliest years Clara had had the best of everything as far as clothes were concerned. The good fairies at her birth had given her nine aunts on her mother's side and sixteen

female relations on her father's, and these had been supplemented by two godmothers at her christening. And every birthday and Christmas and on odd occasions throughout the year, the postman would arrive heaped high with little boxes, tissue-paper lined, containing wonderfully embroidered garments for the infant Clara. A special expanding wardrobe had to be bought to house Clara's clothes, and soon a special room had to be set aside to house Clara's continually expanding wardrobe.

And meanwhile Clara herself was expanding rapidly, which was just as well because it gave Clara's mother an opportunity of buying little garments for her herself. And what with little smocks with matching bloomers and pixie hoods and velvet capes, Clara's mother enjoyed herself very much, and Clara didn't really mind because she lived in a little world of her own anyway.

It was a sad blow to Clara's mother when the time arrived to send Clara off to boarding-school. There really wasn't a great deal of scope in the buying of gym. tunics and white blouses and regulation felts and Panamas, but as Clara's mother sewed the name-tab on each garment she thought longingly of the day when Clara would emerge butterfly-fashion from the drabness of navy serge into the dazzling radiance of a white tulle coming-out gown.

But to her mother's horror when Clara left school she refused to come out at all, except to go for long hikes through the wide open spaces with the local Tramping Club, wearing three pairs of woollen socks, hobnailed boots, khaki shorts, and a selection of miscellaneous woollen garments. And though in the end Clara's mother persuaded her to take up golf, which meant that she could wear a skirt which at least covered her knees, Clara soon discovered that on second-rate courses you could get away with wearing slacks. And this worried Clara's mother a lot because frankly she doubted whether Clara who was inclined to be plump could get away with it.

MEANWHILE Clara, who didn't really want to be a playgirl, had got herself a job in the city. And Clara's mother thought that perhaps Clara would profit by the example of the other girls in the office and start taking a little interest in her personal appearance. So she went into town one day and bought Clara a selection of clothes suitable for office wear—several dark frocks with white collars and cuffs and class in every line, a well-cut costume or two, and some simple tailored blouses. But Clara refused to wear any of them. She had cut down her Old School Gym. Frock into a pleated skirt and she insisted on wearing

Women and the Home



"... At first her mother was inclined to protest when she never changed for dinner"

this with a jersey in winter and one of her Old School Blouses and an Old School Tie in summer. She used to say that it saved her having to think what to put on when she got up in the morning. And as she insisted on going to and from work every day on her motor-bike perhaps it was just as well that she never wore silk stockings. It was in vain that the girls at work gave her little pep talks on the necessity for cultivating oomph, and the advantages of a good permanent wave. Clara squashed them effectively by remarking that she was thinking of getting her hair cut Eton as it would be so much less troublesome that way.

SO what with one thing and another the announcement of clothes-rationing came as a delightful surprise to Clara. In spite of her harsh exterior she was a sensitive child, and the constant pleading of her mother and the criticisms of her friends at work had not been without their effect upon her. Now she would have a fool-proof answer to all their suggestions for sartorial improvements, for by refusing to spend money on clothes (indeed by being unable to spend money on clothes thanks to the introduction of the coupon system) she was assisting the country's War Effort and helping to keep at bay the twin demons of Inflation and Panic Buying. And, what was even better, neither her mother nor her friends would be in a position to criticise, for they, thanks to the coupon system, would speedily be reduced to her own sartorial level.

Of course Clara realised that at first they would have enough garments to carry on, but six months after rationing had been introduced she noticed with glee that her mother and friends were being forced to invest in a stout tweed skirt, and that the wearing of season-old jerseys was becoming more frequent. Another year and everyone would be forced to adopt a uniform similar to hers.

ONE day, in honour of Clara's twenty-first birthday, Clara's mother gave a little dinner party and asked all Clara's friends from the office as well as one or two members of Clara's tramping club. Clara put on her Old School Skirt and a clean blouse, confident that her well-worn ex-gym. tunic would compare favourably with anything her mother or

(Continued on next page)

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, JUNE 26

"I am writing for my husband, who suffered from stomach trouble," says Mrs. T. R. "He is a firm believer in De Witt's Antacid Powder and gets more relief from this than anything else. We always keep it in the house. I also give it to the children if they show signs of a bilious attack."

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