

New Dress Styles Draw Censure

Hygiene

"An unmitigated evil", "unhealthful", "deplorable", "unfortunate" are some of the comments of leading physicians when asked by Science Service to give their opinions of the newest styles of women's dress. These doctors have considered the probable effect on women's health of a return to dress styles of an earlier age. They agree that woman today is healthier than she was in the days of tight-fitting corsets and long, sweeping dresses.

Recalling the long full skirts worn 20 years ago, these physicians also recalled the germ-laden clouds of dust and dried dirt that these skirts raised when women walked along the streets. The trailing skirt was considered a menace to the woman's own health and to that of others about her.

These physicians remembered, too, the tightly-corseted figure of some years ago. They remembered how the liver and spleen were pushed up out of their normal, proper place in the body, and the intestines crowded down by the tight lacing necessary to achieve a "wasp waist".

Of course, the newest dresses are not wasp-waisted, and street dresses do not yet sweep the ground—far from it. However, many forward-looking persons are asking whether the latest fashion of longer skirts, form-fitted dresses and corsets will stop where it is, or whether it will not swing all the way back to the extremes of the gay nineties and the early nineteen hundreds.

Long, full skirts, even if they do not reach the ground, and corsets, no matter how loosely fitting, are hampering to physical activity. Some physicians see harm enough in the new clothes if they do no more than keep women from engaging in the healthful athletic activities which have kept them out in the fresh air and sunlight and given them new health and endurance in the years since the World War. Hampering garments also would make women less agile in dodging the present-day swiftly moving vehicles, and might prove an added accident hazard to the great numbers of women now engaged in industrial operations.

Some leaders of the medical profession believe that with woman's lately acquired physical freedom has come a greater freedom of mind and spirit. The modern woman will probably refuse to be a "slave to fashion" and will insist on the dress styles in



THE DESCENT OF THE FROCK: Will it go to the germ-catching lengths that the Gibson Girl wore a quarter-century ago? Physicians and public health workers hope it will not!

which she has found greatest comfort, freedom of movement, and, perhaps, greatest health.

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Unhealthful Change

Hygiene

By DR. MALCOLM L. HARRIS, president, American Medical Association:

I think the newest fashion in women's tight-fitting dresses and corsets an unfortunate and unhealthful change. Long, full skirts for street wear are unhygienic. The loosely clad athletic woman had more freedom of movement; she was more graceful, healthier, and had more endurance than the pre-war type of woman.

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Curtailment of Activities

Hygiene

By DR. WILLIAM GERRY MORGAN, president-elect, American Medical Association:

Whereas, a few more inches added to the length of the flapper type of skirt might be more pleasing to the eye and somewhat less suggestive to the masculine mind, yet a return to the pre-war styles of tight corsets, high waistline, long full-flowing skirts and drooping hats would be regrettable in the extreme and would in all probability result in curtailment of some of the health-giving athletic activities which women have been benefiting by during the past few years.

Since the more sane type of cloth-

ing worn by women at the present time there has been a very striking decrease in physical defects such as misplaced abdominal viscera with weakened and atonic muscles of the trunk, notably of the abdomen, and fewer postural defects. Lung capacity has been increased and lung activity has become more nearly normal in the average young woman. There has been a marked improvement in circulation with a corresponding improvement in the color and texture of the skin, with a marked lessening of the necessity for the use of the rouge pot and powder pot.

Science News-Letter, November 16, 1929

Styles Will Continue

Hygiene

By DR. HUGH S. CUMMING, Surgeon-General, U. S. Public Health Service:

A reason for the late styles of short, loose-fitting clothes for women lay in the greater activity women have engaged in of late years. This reason still exists, hence the styles will probably continue to exist.

Without presuming to forecast fashions in women's clothing, I think it improbable that women will ever go back to the tight corsets of the past. Room around the hips and abdomen is necessary for the present activities women engage in. At that, as far as the chest is concerned, the old-fashioned corsets were better than the tight brassieres (*Turn to next page*)