

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.

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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*)

New Dress Styles Draw Censure of Physicians—Continued

women have worn more recently.

For the last two or three years women's clothing has been very sensible, generally speaking, although in some parts of the country skirts have been a little too short from the standpoint of looks. Longer skirts, especially for evening wear, I consider very graceful, but on the other hand, skirts that sweep the ground would be unhealthful for wear on the streets and in shops and offices.

Women's close-fitting hats of the last few years are sensible if they are not worn too tight. I cannot see that the wide hat will become very popular. Wide hats don't go with airplanes and autos.

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Both Good and Bad

Hygiene

By DR. HERMAN N. BUNDESEN, past president, American Public Health Association:

The return to the wearing of long, tight-fitting dresses with trains, corsets, and large drooping hats has a few good features, as well as several bad ones.

Concerning the corsets, they cause pressure or constriction, and block the flow of blood through the veins. If the wrong kind of corset is worn, it will also cause pressure on the internal organs of the abdomen, and will interfere, to some extent, with normal breathing. On the other hand, in some instances, a certain type of corset is helpful in lending support to the abdominal muscles when they are somewhat lax. However, exercise of these muscles is probably of more benefit than the wearing of an artificial support.

There are certain individuals who cannot stand exposure to cold, and these people catch cold easily. Such persons would benefit by the long dresses. On the other hand, most normal individuals, who gradually harden themselves to the changes in the weather, build up their strength and resistance to infection.

Of course, long skirts, which drag on the floor or ground, are unhygienic. They also interfere with freedom of movement, while large hats obstruct the vision, as well as prohibit the rays of sunshine from striking the face. As a result, the long skirts and large hats may lead to more accidents, while the cutting off of the sun's rays interferes directly with good health.

The freedom of movement given by

the clothing worn by women following the war led to better health. As a general rule, the scantily clad, athletic woman is healthier than was the pre-war type.

It is probable that the change in styles should be looked on with some disfavor. The ideal clothing for women should be comfortable and should not interfere with the freedom of movement. At the same time, sufficient clothing should be worn to offer protection against the weather.

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Present Nearly Ideal

Hygiene

By DR. ALICE HAMILTON, assistant professor of Industrial Medicine, Harvard Medical School:

Regarding the recent attempt to bring back old-fashioned forms of dressing for women, if the change means a return to close-fitting corsets, small waists, and long, full skirts, the effect can only be very deplorable. This is especially true as affecting the health, comfort and safety of working women.

Accidents will be more frequent if skirts are long and full, while tightly fitting waists and increased weight of skirts will hamper free use of the body and make work much harder and more uncomfortable.

The present mode of dressing (not the present style of shoes) is nearly ideal for factory women, while they are indoors, for the light-weight, scanty dresses, loosely fitting and often sleeveless, give no chance for machinery to catch and cause accidents, do not cause tripping, allow full play for muscles and prevent much of the discomfort of work in hot rooms.

It may well be said that these clothes are insufficient protection against cold weather, but the newer fashion would not remedy that.

The change seems to me to be an unmitigated evil, a step back to a more ignorant and sillier age.

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Women Won't Submit

Hygiene

By DR. JOSEPH COLT BLOODGOOD, Johns Hopkins Hospital and Medical School:

I doubt if any change in dress which American women would submit to would have any effect on health. The basic facts which are best for the preservation of health have little to do with dress.

It is also my opinion that American women now freed from the old type of dressing will not submit to any change which is uncomfortable. The healthy, intelligent women will dictate their own style of clothes.

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Women Better Physically

Hygiene

By DR. PAUL E. BROOKS, Deputy Commissioner of Health, State of New York.

For several years now there has been a systematic effort to introduce styles which would bring back the long dresses and long hair.

Twenty or thirty years ago women were wearing heavy clothes of a sort that interfered with circulation in vital organs, and practically eliminated any possibility of deep breathing or freedom of muscular action. My father, a conservative physician, expressed the feeling that the women were to be congratulated when they made a very radical move some thirty years ago and shortened to ankle length the skirts which had previously been wiping up germ-laden dust and dirt from streets and floors.

Since that time there have been much more radical changes, which have come about gradually. Tight corsets have almost disappeared; clothing is light and no longer burdensome; arms, legs and breathing organs are free to function as they were designed to function.

It is my belief that women, as a class, are in better physical condition today, partly if not wholly as a result of the freedom of action resulting from this change, and in the opinion of certain competent observers, they also look better.

In any event, women recently have been displaying an independence and judgment, in their refusal to allow themselves to be stampeded into accepting styles that they don't want, which entitles them to still more of our admiration and respect, if that is possible. It is my hope that their independence will not weaken and that they will continue to hold out for clothes that not only contribute to attractive appearance but favor health, happiness and longevity.

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Small parachutes are now used by the Army Air Corps in order to land safely the expensive gliders used in target practice.