

**THE PASSING OF THE SHEATH SKIRT.**

Unless a woman's bank account be beyond reproach she must needs have a sense of humor. Fashion plays such tricks. This season it is skirts that are cutting up antics. Two years ago it was coats. The women who knew no better had valuable furs made up and remade into Russian blouses in August and September, only to find before cold weather had fairly set in, that the pouched front and belted, peasant-inspired garment was the sign manual of the ready-to-wear shops and was ignored by the furriers of fashionable women.

This Autumn the habit-backed skirt hugged the delusion that it was good for another season, until ever so many women had added to their wardrobes every dress they felt able to afford before next Spring, and all of these were made with an exaggeratedly mermaid effect below the belt. But then, presto! every Paris establishment with a reputation for originality to maintain puts forth a new skirt, and not one of them with a smooth back.

No two of the new skirts are alike, but all of them are so different from the earliest models that there is bound to be a tremendous run upon long coats to cover the habit skirt's crestfallen aspect. All of the late skirt models are plaited. Those for cloth are plaited all the way round upon some of the smartest gowns. As the plaits are generated from a seamless and plaitless hip yoke, consummate skill is required on the part of the workpeople. Some of the skirts for evening frocks in simulated princess styles have a few plaits running from the low-cut bodice top to the edge of the train; these are over-lapped with a second fabric, to carry out the idea of one robe opening over another, which is always good when cleverly manipulated.

In the matter of coats and cloaks there is likely to be an inundation of long garments, but well-dressed women know that they are driving coats traveling cloaks or full evening dress cloaks, and will restrict their use to those occasions, as do the English women and French women for whom the new models were first designed.

The women with really fine fur hats feel, naturally enough, like throttling the popular-priced milliners who have flooded the town in a single week with cheap and wretched imitations of the handsome originals. But, after all, the women who own the real sables, chin-chillas, etc., have only themselves to blame. If they had refrained from exhibiting their frosty-weather modes—which is what fur hats and fur-trimmed hats are solely—till winter had arrived they might then have worn their splendor undisturbed for a few weeks. But no; out came the fur hats while the horses were steaming and humanity gasping with humidity, and as it was just when the masses were wondering what to buy, they immediately decided to buy fur; and already, for every woman smartly gotten up in a sable decked toque, they are fifty with top-heavy-looking structures of Mephitic chinga and other animals dyed in previous designs.

The criterion of any toilet of pretension of the day is the amount of hand work upon it. Trimmings that are ready made and applied are often of quite marvelous beauty; but in order to bring a gown up to the standard of elegance demanded by the times much work must be done upon the dress material. The cunningly wrought products of the nimble fingers of over sea workers, who, whatever the facts in the case may be, turn out work that looks as if the workers loved it, are no longer simply sewed on; they must be set in and made part and parcel of the fabric

by embroidery of one sort or another. It adds furiously to the cost of a dress, of course.

Out of a dozen elegant and effective evening frocks, seen this week, two of the several notions introduced are especially noteworthy. One is very simple the other very elaborate. One is a trimming made for a net gown from panne, which is nothing more nor less than a long pile velvet, really an evolution of plush, only that does not sound fascinating, and panne does. This decoration is made from a strip caught together with needle and thread and art to form a rose like petals, and giving in the end a trailing bodice garniture of lustrous effect.

The other is a lace bertha, long stole to below the knees and circular skirt trimming all woven in one, the lace picked out here and there with faintly iridescent paillettes. This is not simple but very beautiful. Spangles en masse are a survival, and savor of the stage adventures, but, used with discretion merely as a bit of high light here and there, as they are on some of the newest frocks they are their own excuse for staying on after they had been told that their welcome was quite worn out. Minute cut jets and imitation pearls as effective as the real gems are used in the embroideries on handsome reception gowns.

But these are things that are. Among the things to be, and that shortly, are slightly low necks on all indoor gowns, including day frocks, and these accompany, in the designs now being made ready, sleeves that hug the arm at the elbow and stop there without so much as a frill.—Town Topics.

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