1932

Hobble, Hobble, Little Skirt...

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Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol12/iss5/7

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S EVEN, eight, nine yards!" exclaimed Elsie Iowa State, in 1892. "Ellen, I do believe that my skirt is at least a yard wider than Ida's," she added with satisfaction.

No, nine yards was no exceptional breadth for the voluminous skirts worn by the co-eds of that period. Gored or circular, these skirts must fall in great flounce-like folds from the tight-fitting waists. Often they were lined with canvas to secure the desired tabular effect of the folds. Dresses were princess in style with a normal waistline, the tight waist and full skirt giving Elsie the hourglass silhouette. But sleeves—sleeves kept pace with the skirts, attaining extravagant dimensions near the shoulders. Stiff materials were employed to line these sleeves in order to make them sufficiently bouffant; reeds also were quite effective in holding out the "leg o' muttons."

About this time Dame Fashion decreed that "wide shoulders are just the last thing, my dear." Elsie scrambled through her trunk and used berthas, fichus, ribbons, and laces near the shoulders to emphasize their width. Co-eds had begun to participate in sports; the skirt worn with a black and white or dark-toned skirt became very popular for these occasions. A taste for odd waists developed; red, blue, and green plaid or striped skirtwaists appeared on the campus.

In 1902 we find that the dominant trend of the dress of the nineties survived with few changes. Instead of the full, voluminous skirt, the skirt now fitted snugly to the knees, from there flared greatly to the hem, touched the ground, and ended in a train. It was no little thrill for Betty to daintily catch up this train as she walked with her escort across the dance floor. Whimsical Fashion dictated that sleeves should go from one extreme to another; the long, fitted variety finally replaced the large, full sleeve of previous years.

By 1912 a revolution had occurred in Elsie's dress. Two years previously the skirt which had shrunk to unbelievable small proportions came in, ignoring the natural curves of the body. With this narrow skirt, the narrow sleeves and narrow shoulders of the bodice, the straight-line silhouette was made. Though still reaching to the ground, many of the skirts measured only 32 inches to a yard and a half on the lower edge. Co-eds found it difficult to walk, and the hobbling gait of the Japanese geisha became fashionable, as none other was possible. Pulpit and press assailed and ridiculed this mode as no fashion had ever been attacked since the time of the Louis. It was derided as the "halter-skirt," the "sheath," and the "hobble skirt."

"Hobble, hobble, little skirt,
How I wonder what you wort.
Perchance maybe a papa's pant
Now for him a tripe scant."

But the more this style was assailed the more did Elsie flout its decreasing dimensions on the campus. Then some daring co-ed further shocked pulpit and press by slashing this skirt from the lower edge to the knee. It soon was known everywhere as the "slashed skirt."

It was either worn slashed at the sides, slashed front and back, or slashed at every seam. Insertions of plaited panels of cloth in the openings satisfied many, but the more daring left the openings in the skirt and wore underneath a bright colored silk petticoat or satin Turkish trousers! Later in the year, the peg-top skirt was introduced. Along with these narrow skirts, the blouses became collarless and peasant in design, stylists modeling after Bulgaria and Roumania in costumes. The high hats were set well down on the high forehead, turning the ears into "vanity cases." Elsie brought the "vanity case;" it soon became indispensable. Novel sport clothes for women made their appearance—riding trousers, sweaters, colorful scarves, sport gloves, and sport hose; these comfortable garments encouraged co-eds to go out for riding, skating and hiking. Hats were small and were worn crushed down on the back of the head, allowing the frizzed ends of the bob to escape at the sides.

With the advent of the World War, women's dress began to change, and by 1922 we find entirely different styles. Women at work in offices and factories had demanded a simple, practical garment, and this demand had been met with the inexpensive one-piece dress which came in to stay. Enter the "flapper" on every campus—sophisticated air, clipped bob, rouged cheeks, painted lips, short, tight dress with low-cut neck, sheer hose, and high-heel slippers. With her she brought the "vanity case;" it soon became indispensable. Novel sport clothes for women made their appearance—riding trousers, sweaters, colorful scarves, sport gloves, and sport hose; these comfortable garments encouraged co-eds to go out for riding, skating and hiking.

HOBBLE, HOBBLE, LITTLE SKIRT

By Hazel Leupold

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What a smart hat—once!