

very remote part of the United Kingdom, Penzance, which is only ten miles from Land's End. The amount of fish occasionally caught off the coast of Cornwall is at times prodigious. Perhaps in time, when this method of curing fish becomes better known, less food will be wasted than is, unfortunately, too often the case at present. To cook smoked hake or cod-fish, which are split open and resemble in colour and size gigantic haddocks, all you have to do is to place the fish in sufficient cold water to cover it, bring it slowly to the boiling point, and then let it simmer gently for five or ten minutes, according to the thickness of the fish. Smoked cod and haddock make capital breakfast dishes, and are exceedingly nice served with egg sauce, made as follows:—Place two or three eggs in cold water, bring the water to boiling point, and then let them boil for ten minutes; remove the shell while they are hot, and place them in a basin previously made very hot by being placed in the oven. Chop these hard-boiled eggs up as finely as possible with a knife and fork and about an ounce of

butter. Of course the heat of the eggs and basin will melt the butter and make the minced egg moist. Add a little pepper and salt, and pour this mixture over the fish, or serve it separately in a tureen. Some persons will think it a great improvement to add a dessertspoonful of anchovy sauce and a little cayenne pepper. This sort of sauce would be particularly suitable to a college breakfast at Oxford or Cambridge.

A very nice way of utilising the remains of any boiled fish that may be left is to have it curried. Hake, ling, halibut, or cod make excellent curry, and, like smoked hake and smoked cod, are particularly suitable for breakfast. In making curry sauce for fish, you must proceed somewhat differently from what you would were you making ordinary curry sauce. The first point to be borne in mind is that we do not wish the sauce to be too dark in colour; consequently, when you fry the onions, fry them very gently in a little butter until they are tender, but do not fry them brown; and if a few pieces of onion get burnt during the

process it is best to remove them. It is also advisable to let the onions cook for a considerable time, though very slowly. By this means the rankness of the onions is entirely removed. These fried onions can either be chopped fine or rubbed through a wire sieve. They should then be moistened with a little stock, the best stock for the purpose being fish stock made from the bones of the fish. This stock, when cold, forms a very hard jelly. To half a pint of stock add a dessertspoonful of curry powder and a teaspoonful of curry paste. The remains of the fish are then shred with a couple of forks, and warmed up in the curry sauce. This fish curry can be served in the middle of a border of plain boiled rice. The orthodox way of serving curry is to have the curry in one dish and the boiled rice in another; and in handing it round, the rice should be handed before the curry. Persons who are in the habit of eating curry will take a spoonful of rice and make a little well in the centre with a spoon, then take some curry, and place it in the well.

DRESSMAKING AS A TRADE IN LIFE.



all businesses that a woman or girl can take up as a profession for life there are none more onerous, none more difficult, than dressmaking. And yet, if well done and thoroughly learned, no business is more

profitable in the long run. But I should advise no one to start upon such an undertaking without a decided gift and liking, and, above all, an almost unlimited power for patient endurance.

Dressmaking is rougher than millinery, more irksome in its details, and there is necessarily far more opportunity for loss. This fact is at once made apparent if you consider for a few moments the wide difference there is between the amount of stock required for one business and that required for the other. But the profits are far larger, and the cost of production almost the same. By this I mean that the wages paid are about the same as those given in the millinery, and the comparative difference of the number of workers, or "hands," as they are technically termed, is not so great.

And again, rent is necessarily the same, and you can do four and five times the "turn-over"—that is, the amount of money paid into the "house"—in dressmaking that you can in millinery.

This last fact considerably decreases the cost of production, and materially augments the "profits." I shall deal with these facts again later on. I very strongly urge that the same amount of care, *if not more*, is required about the investigation of "houses" a girl proposes to enter. The class of ordinary trade girl who goes into the usual dressmaking business is very much more rough, more uneducated, than those who enter millinery. Dressmaking is divided into two branches, and a girl should carefully consider before entering for which of the two she has most taste.

These two branches may be roughly classified as "cutting" and "showroom." These departments are not interchangeable, as they may be in millinery. In dressmaking a "cutter" never by any chance goes into the "showroom"; and a "showroom" hand knows nothing whatever about cutting. They are totally distinct lines of life, and both are

well paid when thoroughly known. I will now follow out a "cutter's" education, and then trace the "showroom" work.

One reason for this pronounced difference is, that the work is so very heavy that from the beginning the line is different.

The apprenticeship lasts two years; and here, again, if a girl will start as a "matcher," she will acquire practical knowledge not to be gained later on. Some houses require premiums and some do not. When first apprenticed to a workroom, a girl is set to make pockets, and is taught how to cut them out. Here again the work divides into two distinct branches—"bodice work" and "skirt work." Every girl will find that she has more taste for one or the other of these two branches. If a girl has a taste for cutting and fitting, she very rarely drapes well. If, on the other hand, she has a taste for draping, and is artistic about it, then again it is seldom that she cuts well.

In Paris these branches are kept quite distinct, and girls are allowed free choice as to which they prefer; hence we find that each department is thoroughly well done. But in England there is not the same keen perception as to the "fitness of things," and "skirt hands" are not so carefully trained;—the result is, that in England it is very seldom we find skirts so well hung or so carefully draped as in Paris.

I will now follow the career of a "bodice hand." When you are apprenticed you are first taught how to "fell" and cast-over the bodice seams, and it is exceedingly rare to find this work as well done in England as in Paris. The inside of a real "Parisian corsage" is as beautifully finished and as carefully worked as the outside; but very often in England this inside "casting" is roughly and clumsily done. It is a sad fact, but the truth, that English girls do not take the same trouble over their work as the French girls do. This is not only my own experience, but it has been told to me by many heads of dressmaking departments in the best West-end shops. This is the reason why so many French girls are employed in the best London houses instead of English girls. People have often said to me, "Why do you employ French girls instead of your own countrywomen?" My answer has invariably been that "the work is better"; and this is the experience of every employer in dress-making. Therefore, I recommend every girl who wishes to be a good dressmaker, and to earn good wages, to be very careful over this early work.

"Boning" is taught next, and this is almost an art. A really first-class "boner" is nearly always a good fitter, for good "boning" generally denotes that you have a "good hand on a bodice"—an all-important factor in the case. After this you pass on to elementary stitching and sewing; you must learn how to work a machine on a bodice, and how to "finish" neatly and carefully. At this point you become third in the workroom, and if you want to advance you should try your hand on as much *private work* as you can get, putting into practice all the theoretical knowledge that you can pick up from carefully watching the *première*, or "first hand." From this stage onwards all depends on your own talent and quickness. If the "second" is away you should be ready to fill her place. As "third hand" you are also taught how to cut and make sleeves. Here I must again digress to Paris, for sleeve-cutting and making is a very difficult art, and it is only our neighbours over the water who carry this detail out to perfection. It is there made a definite branch; and in first-class Parisian houses the "sleeve hand" fits on her own work just as the "skirt hand" does. It is this minute attention to small details which has made Paris renowned all over the world for dressmaking and fitting. Gladly would I see the same name growing up for English dressmakers; but unfortunately they do not perceive whence this difference arises. And I strongly desire our English women to recognise and understand the reason for this difference; therefore, I suggest to girls that no work, no detail, should be "scamped," and to practice "out of hours."

As "third hand" you also learn how to "trim" bodices, and how to sew embroidery on. Your work is generally given to you "pinned" and arranged by the "second," and you have to carry out and finish off the details. Here innate fineness of touch and delicacy of taste will give you a great advantage. The *première* will soon know who to turn to for carrying out difficult work; you will thus gain her confidence, and she will be ready and willing to show you her work, if she finds that a really appreciative interest is taken in it.

As "second hand" you will take all the more simple bodices and cut them yourself, being carefully watched by the "first hand"; but you must always bear in mind that everything depends on your own efforts—that if you have practised alone as "third" you will be able to profit by every opportunity that comes

later on. You will now "take the bodice," as it is termed, from the "first hand"; you will be responsible for it to her. In some houses there is an intermediary, termed a "corrector"; but only in England—never in Paris. No Parisian *première* would allow her work to be touched by anyone but herself; hence the work is generally more complete, and not so uneven as in English houses.

When you have reached the point of being a good "second" in a first-class workroom, then you have a good chance of being taken as a "first cutter" in some good house.

Turning now to the "skirt department," if you find you have more talent for artistic drapery than for cutting, make a *specialité* of it, and turn all your attention to it. On entering this branch you are first taught how to run and stitch the long seams smoothly and well. You are taught to make waistbands, both round and flat, and then you are taught how to put the skirt into the band. This is a very important matter, and changes with every phase of fashion.

But there are certain fundamental lines which must be thoroughly acquired. It is exceedingly necessary to learn how to put "gathers" or "pleats" into a band so that it may set well, and not be either "bunchy" or "dragged." Then comes the adjusting of the under-skirt, or foundation to the dress. There is more trouble over skirts in England than over bodices. My experience shows me that it is possible to find three good "bodice hands" to one thorough "skirt hand."

This arises from the fact that I have noticed before, *i.e.*, that sufficient care is not given to this department in England. It is a curious point to notice, in dealing with workrooms, how very rough is the class of girls who, as a rule, become "skirt hands."

After passing through the various stages above enumerated, besides learning to put on "flounces," "laces," and "piping" of various kinds, you then become "second skirt hand;" and now you will take all the simple orders for skirts, and begin to cut your own first orders. Next you will begin to do simple draping for the "first hand," and work under and for her. You will be taught how to cut trained skirts and court dresses—an exceedingly difficult thing to do well.

There is an infinite possibility for artistic development when you become a "first hand": there is a wide field here open to artistic girls, and good skirt hands are very well paid. The highest salary I have known given in this department is £250 per annum. This would only be after some ten years of hard work, and some experience in Paris.

In dressmaking, "overtime," as it is called, is always *paid extra* at the rate of threepence, fourpence, and sixpence an hour, according to the salary received. Millinery "overtime" is not paid; therefore it is possible to make more money in dressmaking than in millinery. During the pressure of the London season all "hands" work very late, but they are paid extra for it; there is also a limitation set by law to the "overtime" work, and every workroom is bound to have a copy of the Factory Act placed in a prominent position. The inspectors call from time to time to see that there is no overcrowding, and that the work-

rooms are properly ventilated. Any girl has the right to give notice to the inspectors if the rules posted up are not properly kept by the head of the workroom.

Happily, the old days, when the work-girls were made to work all through the night, are now gone by owing to the "Act;" and if the hands do not choose to do "overtime," they are at liberty to go at seven or eight p.m., or whatever the hour is up to which they are engaged.

Turning to the second branch of the dressmaking business, I will now trace out the "sale, or showroom," education.

If a girl intends to "take sales," as it is termed, or to be in the showroom, she should first apprentice herself to the "stockroom" in some large good house. Here she is taught the value and quality of the stock; she has to do the matching in the house—that is, patterns are sent in from the workroom, and she has to find the material and give out the proper quantities. Book-keeping to a certain extent is also taught in this department, and every small detail belonging to trimmings and ornaments, from the smallest item to the largest quantity of material, is carefully shown to a girl. It is a most valuable education. After a year, or two years, according to a girl's natural abilities, have been thus spent, she is then placed in a subordinate position in the showrooms. She is then taught how to sell. At first she takes the work over the counters, where everything is distinctly marked. If she proves a good quick saleswoman, she is then passed on to be the head of a department in the shop. Here any organising capabilities that she has, come into work, and much valuable knowledge can be gained. After this, the next step is into the showroom for made-up costumes, cloaks, and mantles. On reaching this stage you find the value of your stockroom education, for it is impossible to give correct estimates for dresses and mantles unless you have passed through the very hard grind of the stockroom. It is most important to be able to give a correct estimate to a customer without delay; if it is not done, you are apt to leave the impression on your customer's mind that there are different prices for different people. In a large establishment there is a regular scale of charges, but if you wish to have a business of your own, and you are toiling through all this work as an education with that end in view, then very accurate attention should be paid to this part.

In small houses, prices must vary to a certain extent, and therefore you should be able to make a very rapid mental estimate of the cost of materials and trimmings when customers ask for various changes in costumes, which changes necessitate alterations in the prices. If you are obliged to say that "you will send the estimate," the delay often means the loss of a sale. The variableness of customers is something quite wonderful!

There is yet another department in dressmaking which has grown up during the last few years, and is now a definite branch requiring great taste—I refer to "tea-gowns" and "tea-jackets."

It is a curious fact that only the best educated and most refined girls of the commercial class can do anything in this branch.

The taste required is so delicate, the work must be so good, that it really stands in the Art department of dressmaking. It is thus peculiarly fitted for girls of our own class who wish to go into business; it is also well paid, for the demand for good workers is greater than the supply.

If a girl or woman really wants to be successful in dressmaking, I should suggest the following course. First get apprenticed to the stockroom in some good house. Here you will learn all your matching under cover, for you will not go out—the stock is always used from the house, or sent from wholesale establishments in the city. In the stockroom you will pick up, if you are quick, a great deal of valuable knowledge about the management of the house and general business principles.

Next you will pass on to the shop, and there you may quite possibly be able to pass straight into the large showrooms. Now if you propose to start a business of your own, you have two courses open to you—(1) To start at once with this great drawback, *i.e.*, you know nothing at all about the management of the workroom, which is the basis of a dressmaking business; (2) Or you can now apprentice yourself to a workroom, and spend three or four more years over the grind of beginning again. But you have this consolation before you, that from beginning to end you know the dressmaking business—your workrooms cannot cheat you, because you understand every detail of the work. Having gone through it yourself, you know practically what amount of work ought to be turned out by the end of a week. There is a term applied to certain workrooms which is very significant, *i.e.*, "scamping." It is a peculiar system of tricking, by which a workroom appears to be very busy, but in reality does very little. This is fatal to the profits of a house, and there is no way of preventing this unless you know the work practically. If you have the patience to bear this double grind, you will be armed at all points, for in the showroom you will calculate your own estimates, and thus avoid being cheated by your own *employées*. It is sad to know of the amount of material that is wasted by bad calculations and false estimates.

There is more waste and loss in a dressmaking business over the "cutting-out" than is imagined, and a very great deal of dishonesty can creep in. I do not want to dishearten any girl who desires to take up dressmaking as a trade in life; I am simply showing how to make yourself invulnerable at all points. After all the grind is no greater than that a girl takes when she is working for various "degrees." It is more remunerative, for once having passed all this preliminary struggle, you are then *worth money*.

Indeed, a brave-hearted, right-minded girl can do very well as a dressmaker. Much patience is needed, and many disagreeables have to be borne; but there comes an end to all trials in life's journey, and dressmaking trials are like others—if bravely faced there comes a day when you can look back at them with a sense of quiet contentment, even with thankfulness for the many lessons they have taught you.

