

Baltimore High School Girls Solving Problem Of Correct Daily Dress

Instructors Of Eastern High School Advocate Simplicity In Student Dress And Practical Instruction In Dress-making And Millinery Is Added To Precept To Impress Upon Students The Truth That The Basic Principle Of Costuming As An Art Is Suitability To Occasion.

By EMILY EMERSON LANTZ.

"For Loveliness
Needs not the foreign aid of ornament
But is, when unadorned, adorned the most."
—Thomson.

THE appropriate dress of a schoolgirl, what she shall wear and where withal she shall be clothed, is a matter of serious thought to her parents and instructors and usually a subject of exceedingly serious thought to herself.

Those who have made artistic study of the subject realize that youth needs no adornment. The greater the simplicity of costume, the more is emphasized the golden glint, or nut-brown warmth of hair, the delicate tin of complexion, the luster of eye and the lissome curves of figure. These are the young girls' common heritage. To display them to best advantage is to eliminate as far as possible any superfluous adornment in the matter of dress. Harmonious and becoming colors in the costume may enhance the effect of the costume, but the fact remains that, while the schoolgirl needs to be clothed, she rarely needs to be dressed.

Some private schools go so far as to require a uniform worn by students—a serge skirt, perhaps, with a middy blouse—but this is usually the case where scholars are of one social class and where parents can afford to provide a school uniform in addition to other out-of-door costumes. In such schools the dress of the schoolgirl is determined for her. But how does she dress when left, so to speak, to follow her own sweet will or where circumstances restrict the expenditure of money for clothes?

Girls Usually Well Dressed.
Miss Helen W. Rippard and Miss E. M. Johnson, instructors in the dress-making department of the home economics classes of the Eastern Female High School, are perhaps as well qualified as any persons in Baltimore to express opinions as to how the average schoolgirl dresses. The girls who enter the Eastern High School are drawn from many localities extending as far east as Highlandtown, as far north as Roland Park, and 14 different nationalities on the school roll afford ample opportunity for a composite impression of dress.

Miss Rippard considered, in speaking of the matter, that on the whole the Baltimore schoolgirl dresses in a manner very suitable to her age and scholastic duties. Some tend to exaggerated coiffures and some to most unsuitable high-heeled shoes or shoes with the heels run down, but their dresses, in the main, are suitable, becoming and tidy. About this time in the year there is usually a tendency to take best dresses for school wear and sometimes these are exceedingly inappropriate, but Miss Rippard says: "I do not criticize a student's dress because one never knows the necessity that may have occasioned the wearing of an unsuitable frock. If a girl comes to the classroom with her face heavily powdered I may send her to wash it off. Constantly we keep before the minds of the girls ideals of personal hygiene. We explain that underclothing is worn not only to clothe the body and keep it warm, but also to protect the outer garment, that is often not washable, from the oils and moisture emanating from the body and that, therefore, the underclothing should be kept clean and frequently changed, while the body itself should be kept scrupulously clean.

Four Years' Course.

"In each of the four years the girls may, if they wish, attend the dressmaking and millinery classes and it is astonishing the enthusiasm the students bring to their work.

"The first-year girls spend that year reviewing the instruction in sewing and in making underclothing. We teach them how to select and use commercial patterns and how to operate a sewing machine." She opened her machine drawer and took out several current patterns. "Styles change constantly and girls are interested in up-to-date designs. We show them how to cut their materials from these patterns and put the parts together and how to make alterations to fit their own figures. The children provide their own fabrics and purchase their own patterns. We add little findings. If the girl possesses average intelligence she grasps the instructions easily and enthusiastically. If she is bright in academic studies she is usually skillful with scissors and needles, although occasionally we find a girl with high scholarship average who apparently cannot learn to either cut out materials or sew.

"In the second year the girls are instructed in the making of outer garments, a middy blouse and sport skirt, perhaps. The third year they work on simple costumes and trim hats. Just now the girls have all taken their hats home, trimmed for Easter, and in the fourth year the girls essay more elaborate costumes, blouses and hats. The course calls for instruction in coat making, also, but owing to the present high cost of coat materials, girls are not obliged to make coats unless they wish. If a girl remains in the school until she graduates and takes the modiste and millinery course in its entirety, she will be able to make any garment a woman wears from a nightgown and kimono to a simple evening dress.

Suitability And Style.

"We endeavor to impress upon students the beauty of modesty in feminine attire. We teach a girl to make an underwaist as pretty as possible, but not a camisole with a mere ribbon over the shoulders."

"How about style in dress?"

Miss Rippard touched a pile of fashion books that lay near at hand. They were up to the month and included some that are only found in the best dress-making establishments.

While the instructor talked she sat at a machine skillfully adding some machine touches to a layette for a Belgian baby. "At odd moments," she said, "my girls are sewing for social welfare and they are also making many layettes for Belgian babies."

It was a pleasant feminine-looking

classroom, with several machines near cheerful windows, into which a class of girls mustered just then, as an instruction period commenced. Each girl went quickly to her desk or to the machine she was being taught to operate and recommenced work on some garment she had laid aside at the preceding lesson. Interested groups gathered about Miss Rippard to ask how to go on with individual tasks, whether a facing should be cut straight or bias, how a waist should be held while basting in a sleeve, while two girls, each with a skirt to be turned up around the bottom, took turns measuring each other's skirt length under the instruction of the teacher.

Tailored Finish Or Trimmed.

In Miss Johnson's classroom Easter hats were still in process of making and two exceedingly tasteful ones were nearly completed. Here many beautiful examples of finished work were folded and laid away for an approaching exhibition of school work. Miss Johnson considered that the correct dress of a schoolgirl must depend in large measure upon climate, but that the cut should be characterized by utmost simplicity. A sport skirt and white middy blouse, she thought, produced perhaps the most attractive effect. But she modestly disclaimed any influence of teachers in regard to the school dress of high school girls. "We can only try to guide them in the garments made here and to wise selection of fabrics, colors and styles. We try to explain differences in weaves, to show them how to distinguish between fabrics dyed in the wool and in the piece and how different widths cut to advantage or disadvantage. At odd moments we instruct them in making a picot edge, an arrowhead as a finish, the correct eyelet for a lacing, tape, etc. It was quite wonderful how dainty the fine yet simple garments were and among them were occasional pairs of curtains with artistic insets of lace.

"A few suggestions on interior decorations are helpful to prospective housekeepers," said the teacher. "When the girl finishes here, while the course as it is now limited does not fit her to become a teacher of dressmaking, she knows how to make everything needful to wear if she be a homemaker, and how to purchase intelligently if she be a wage-earner. To instruct a girl how to select designs for and to make her dresses is one way of keeping her contented within the shelter of her home. A girl who might idle leisure time in the street is inclined to make herself useful and pretty garments or to decorate her room, because she knows how to do it. She is not helpless nor de-

Which Costume Suits Student?



pendent upon others. Some of the girls have made their confirmation dresses in these classes and a few have made their commencement dresses in part. Some fetching white dresses worn by undergraduates who have taken part in the choruses at commencement, the wearers have made here, and most attractive they have looked when wearing them. Miss Johnson opened a drawer containing lingerie most suitable for girlish wearers and stylish blouses finished in thoroughly tailored fashion.

Much Money Saved.

Each garment was marked with the name of the youthful needlewoman who made it and the cost when finished. The difference between the cost of the articles thus made by the girls and what such garments would cost ready made and without the advantage of individual fitting in itself justifies the course of instruction.

In classes such as these the problem of what the schoolgirl should wear seems in process of solving. The older girls have learned what they ought to wear, and youth is quick to accept good standards of dress when their advantages are

pointed out to them, and ambitious to reach such standards. The junior girls take the seniors as their models, and thus the school girl will solve her own dress problem. Judging from the tasteful appearance of the students of the Eastern High School, she is solving it now.