

Molly Buys a Suit

And having a Mind of her own Rebels at Too-Slavish Fashion

DEAR Julia: Well, here I am in the city at last Julia. It's hard to know where to begin to tell you all about it. I am writing this in the dearest pink and white bedroom that any girl could wish, but I am not in a fit state to describe it to you to-night. Sister Agnes' house is beautiful, just exactly as one sees in the magazines. It's a description, too, must wait for another letter. I know, because I feel it in my bones, that this is going to be the most delightful visit, but it was hard to leave mother. And I know I am not nearly so tired as you people would have me believe. However, I am going to do just exactly as Agnes wishes, and, as the cartoon in the Moss Creek Expositor says, have the time of my life.

There is so much I would like to tell you about Agnes' house and her clothes, but they must all await my mood. Her clothes are dreams, Julia, dreams. And here I come to the real news of my letter. You should have seen Agnes when I took my clothes out of my trunk. She didn't mean to be rude, but I guess my countrified clothes provoked her to it. "Mersey, such a suit! That isn't what you're going to wear while you're down here! And is that your very best afternoon dress?" She just about screamed at me. "Now, Molly Mason, we're going to get you some decent clothes. I dare say those are all very grand for Moss Creek but they won't do at all for Winnipeg. To-morrow, first thing, we'll see about a suit." That was final. When Agnes says, "We'll do something," you will remember that we usually do it. She always says that people in our position should dress much better. Perhaps we should, for you know last year's crop was like money from home without asking for it.

So here I am, Molly Mason, of Moss Creek, launched on the great adventure of getting a new suit in a city that has simply millions of suits. Agnes said, "Your fall suit must be tailor-made." This, in her most superior tone. As I become more familiar with shopping in Winnipeg I realize what a great step this is, after having always ordered from the catalogs. And any way, Julia, what would we do in Moss Creek if it weren't for the catalogs?

First thing in the morning we went down to what Agnes calls "my tailor." Beautiful gold letters on the windows and doors told us that this was "Lees, Ladies' Tailors." Well, we looked at scores of ladies in fashion books whose architecture was so wobbly-looking that a good wind would have blown them to pieces. But, Julia, there is one thing I'm thankful for—and I know the family won't approve of my thankful spirit here. The ladies in the fashions are all long, with no thickness at all, and that's me. Mr. Lee said, "The very figure for this year's styles." And so before we knew it he was telling me what I should have and how it should be made, and every little detail. I wondered if this was going to be my suit or somebody else's. You know when we get Mary Elliott in Moss Creek to make anything we have to supply the ideas just the same as we do the material, and the thread and everything. But Agnes says this is all the tailor's business. Anyway, I'm glad I don't have to be bothered. I never long to be a butterfly of fashion. It must be very strenuous and exacting—to be that kind of a butterfly I mean.

"Coats are much longer this year. Some are as long as 42 inches. For your height you should have a coat about 35 inches." We decided on a pretty brown tweed. They are going to be made out of everything they can get this year, for materials of wool are so scarce. It is quite heavy and is to be lined throughout with heavy brown satin. But Julia, I'm so disappointed. Tailor-mades are the plainest things. This year the only really fussy thing is a little fullness in the skirt of the coat. The back has two little pleats from the waist down. There is a seam at the waist on the sides from the front

side seams to the back seams. I saw the illustration of a very pretty model, with an over-piece about six inches deep attached at the side waist seams, just like a great pocket. The suits this summer have been so fussy that it is going to be hard for me to become accustomed to the plainer styles. I grasped at the thought of having these little pieces on mine, but I reckoned without my host. "Oh, no," said Mr. Lee, "For the material you have chosen there must be no false pieces. Plain, tailored, mannish pockets are what your suit should have." So I guess it will be so. These sleeves are the regulation coat sleeve, with three or four little bone buttons for finishing.

But the skirt! Oh Julia! They're narrow. Narrower than anything you ever heard of at Moss Creek. A yard-and-a-half wide is all. That means, Julia, that no matter what occasion may arise, or how great the need to step lively, you can only step 27 inches at a time. You could certainly never step in and out of a buggy. You'd have to manage the buggy by a flying leap, both feet at once. I just want to say, "Why will women be so silly!" But I can't, because I'm to be one of the silly ones and its because there were so many silly ones before me to set the pace.

I said quite coolly, for I could see the trend affairs were taking, and you know Julia I die hard, "I'll have mine at least two yards wide." "Oh, no, Miss, if it should ever be known that a two-yard suit went from my establishment this year I'd be a ruined man." Which goes to show, Julia, that the whims of fashion must be regarded. I was informed that with my new suit I must wear brown walking-boots of calf-skin, and must get a brown tailored hat. To relieve the severity of all this plainness I was actually told that I might wear one of those adorable veils that are draped on plain sailor hats, so that some of it hangs nicely down the back.

Well, there is what your little sister, Molly Mason, will look like for some time. Yes, I should say for some time. When I casually asked the price of this new grandeur in suits, I was as calmly told a scandalous price. If I hadn't caught the glint in Agnes' eye, I should simply have swooned away. I really took it quite bravely, though, but I wouldn't even tell my own sister, Julia, for even you couldn't keep it a secret in Moss Creek.

But there is a sadness about having made a ponderous decision such as I made about my suit. Coming down Portage Avenue (this is the street that has the shops on it), didn't I see ever so many suits in the shop windows that I fell perfectly in love with at once. There was one blue that was a dear. I can't describe the shade of blue, but you must remember that old cape of mother's that was purple and faded to such a pretty, soft, dusty blue. It was just like that, and I thought would have suited you beautifully. Down little pleats that fell on either side of the back from the waist were rows of bone buttons just a shade darker than the suit. It had one of those necks that button right up and have a soft stand-up collar. They're worn a good deal. The skirt was as plain as could be. The coat was buttoned with bone buttons and had rows more of them on the sleeves.

There was another model, in taupe shade, which had embroidery at the waist line and around the bottom of the skirt, in gray, silver and purple. The skirt of the coat was quite full, pleats across the back, and gathers at the side. The skirt was plain. The skirts are about the same length as in the summer.

And the blouses! Oh Julia! But the blouses are a letter unto themselves. Maybe the next, maybe not. Give my love to all the family. And Julia, if you're not good to my mother—

Lovingly,

Molly Mason

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