

A Special Offer from the Suit Section

Semi-Princess Dress
of Fine Sheer Lawn
Trimmed With
Swiss Embroidery

Style No.
J-9297

5⁰⁰

J-9297. This attractive Semi-Princess Dress, so beautifully illustrated on this page, is made in our own workrooms and strongly emphasizes the great values we are thus enabled to offer our customers. The material is a fine sheer imported white lawn; the dress being made in one piece and trimmed with Swiss embroidery and lace insertion as shown in cut. It is fastened in the back with concealed pearl buttons on the waist and hooks and eyes on the skirt; trimmed over the shoulders with bretelles of embroidery outlined with Valenciennes insertion and edging, new long pointed Directoire sleeves trimmed with lace insertion and tucks. The skirt is made with a deep flounce, finished with tucking, headed with a row of embroidery insertion and two rows of Valenciennes lace. A very neat, dainty and serviceable dress. Remarkable value **5⁰⁰** at the price.

If by mail, postage extra 25c

All our dresses are made with a deep hem at the bottom.



Sizes

32, 34, 36, 38, 40 and 42 bust, with choice of lengths 38 or 40 ins., measuring from natural waist line to bottom of skirt, down front.

Talk to many Mrs. Bankses and detect a slippage in the bond of confidence Timothy wrought and his sons and successors don't.

Her sister, Margaret Gorman of Welland, admits to "a strange moment of almost panic" at the news the catalogue was to die.

But her word was "shock" for a recent experience. She ordered a wristwatch and Eaton's substituted. "For the first time I ever remember the substitution was of lower quality. They always sent as good a substitute or better. You took it for granted."

If Timothy talked to his early customers through his book like a stern but caring father, his successors also gave guidance.

Pant suits are "in" today. Look to 1918, Fall and Winter, for Eaton's first advice that a proper Canadian lady could wear pants.

No simple offer of merchandise here, but a careful essay. The Canadian woman's brave sisters in England and France, closer to the guns of war, had gone into overalls to better fight the Hun. One could work more efficiently, and that was patriotism. And half a dozen pictures offered proof: sturdy Canadian women milking cows, working at the barn in overalls.

And today. Thong bikinis appear on Toronto beaches, but there is no thong bikini in Spring and Summer, 1976, Eaton's last catalogue. The thong and its advertising would offend some Canadian morality — but would also be a small seller to Eaton's national audience. To avoid it is doing well by doing "good".

Help to soldiers

Ottawa and the company worked together to help First World War soldiers removed for years from normal commerce to avoid gouging by unscrupulous local merchants, Eaton's archivists say.

By comparison, there is a bloodlessness in Eaton's last catalogue. Goods are offered in restrained good taste. Gone are 1913's thrilling page headlines: Interesting Pages of Interesting Values; Remarkable Values, Each a Marvel; Every Item Here Spells Economy.

Gone are the little morality plays of Eaton's running the business for mutual benefit of company and customer. Gone is the picture essay of the 1940s telling, "How we test suit fabrics in the Eaton Research Bureau" which both informed and reassured.

Cold figures from company books are given to explain the catalogue's death: Losses of \$17-million on sales of \$300-million (still almost \$14 for every Canadian).

Blame stiffer and more competition, easier driving to shopping centres, changing times and tastes, perhaps a slowness to be modern.

But wonder a moment: Was it mainly the warm dialogue between Timothy and his country that was allowed to grow cold? ♦

But these were the window dressing. Down the years, it was the words that read like Timothy's own, if they indeed were not, that fascinated.

Between the lists and prices, he lectured the budding nation as a Canadian Horatio Alger who was his own hero.

Frugality and value for the dollar were trumpeted, issue after issue from this obvious rock of security in Toronto to those who lived hard and insecure on the Prairies and beyond.

They grasped it, with impacts to fascinate historians.

The real customers tell it best. Dorothy Banks of Welland, widowed with teen-age grandchildren, recalls her mother, every spring and fall, sending huge orders for catalogue clothing for seven children. Perhaps \$20 or \$25 worth — a lot of money in those days around 1915.

Mrs. Banks's more recent experience may offer insights into the death of Eaton's catalogue.

As Welland grew and offered bigger stores, even malls, as the 15 miles to the even bigger stores of St. Catharines shrank, her shopping turned more local. But her mail order business also turned more towards Simpson's.

"Simpson's seems more today, Eaton's, yesterday," she mused. "Eaton's hasn't had the glamour in its mail order in the last 10 years. And when I go into their mail-order office here, it seems dull somehow."

"I think today's customers may be different, too. When we sent for three yards of cotton years ago and it wasn't totally acceptable, we tended to say 'All right,' and keep it. I think the moderns are more fussy, quicker to send things back. That can't help their business."