

IN PURSUIT OF THE IDEAL

IN the spring the young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

The young woman, too, apt at this season of the year to become sentimental on trivial subjects, but never—never does she allow it to interfere with her all-important springtime quest of clothes.

When a man decides that his winter suit is too heavy and his last year's clothes look shabby, he goes to his tailor and orders another. There is a brief consultation about materials and he may hesitate on a three button sack, but after that the transaction is dismissed from his mind. Even if he buys ready-mades or semi-readies, he does not waste much time in looking about. He knows what he wants and buys the first approximation to it. Not so with his wife. With her it is something not to be treated lightly. For months she gives the subject deep thought, she pours over the fashion pages and considers each style in relation to her figure; each colour in relation to her complexion, and each material with due regard to the time, place and season in which it is to be worn. Her husband's judgment is of little value. He is apt to say: "You look well in that!" If it were merely a question of looking well women would have long ago adopted the costume of a trained nurse.

WOMAN is an idealist. When she decides to purchase a new garment she conceives a vision of such surpassing loveliness for so modest a sum that it is a foregone conclusion that it can never be realized, whether she patronizes the most exclusive dressmaker, buys it at the most fashionable shop, or makes it herself. If her income is large she will probably order a costume which demands long consultations with her dressmaker. To her and her alone will she disclose the fact that her hip measurement has increased, and together they will discuss styles and materials best calculated to disguise this catastrophe. If the dressmaker is truly sympathetic the customer will go away with an elevation of spirit and dream of the next social event when the men will regard her with admiration and the women with envy. But dressmakers have a habit of keeping you waiting and putting you off and, at the delayed second fitting, the costume looks hopeless. At the third there is evidence of some improvement, at the fourth she is resigned and when the dress is finally delivered she is glad if her husband does not say she looks a fright in it and her dearest friend assures her that she doesn't appear fatter than usual. Still the dress can hardly be called a success if it was not delivered in time to be worn at the social event for which it was intended, and the lady decides that after this she will buy only "Ready-mades" (hateful term!) Preferably French models, which cannot be duplicated by her next-door neighbour.

PATRIOTISM vanishes in the quest for clothes. They must be imported or at least closely resemble the models from New York and Paris, and the display in the French department is one of

alluring beauty. She handles the delicate creations with a loving touch—and examines their price tickets with scorn.

"What! Eighty-five dollars for a simple serge!" "Wait a month," whispers her friend, "they'll be reduced. I never buy anything until it's marked down."

Then follow days and weeks of anxious waiting while the winter suit seems oppressive. Each morning while her husband scans the quotations of the stock market, she eagerly runs her eye down the advertisements and finds, not what she is seeking, but other articles which may be bought at less than their market value. Some of these necessitate her attendance at eight o'clock in the morning, when before the doors are open, she takes her place in a mass of keen-faced women—not too particular in their manners—interspersed by a few small merchants. She is reassured by the crowds that the goods offered are extraordinarily cheap, and after much pushing and shoving she triumphantly secures her prize, only to discover on reaching home that the nine cents expended in carfare almost offset the saving.

On another occasion she rises early to buy dress materials reduced to 97 cents, and finds them piled high on the counter, but not a purchaser in sight. The materials appear good, but in the absence of a crowd she mistrusts her judgment and returns empty-handed.

At last the French models are reduced and here a bitter battle is fought for many costumes, bearing the names of world-renowned makers, are to be sold at less than half their former price. The sale, to oblige the fashionable clientele, is fixed for eleven, but long before the hour people begin to arrive and stand in circles round the racks bulging with clothes and swathed in white sheets. The customers try to peep between them, beneath them, but a stern floor-walker spins the racks about like a merry-go-round. Some women try to secure the attention of a saleswoman, telling her their desires—size, colour, style—but except to old customers she turns a deaf ear. Eleven o'clock and the crowd surges about the racks. The floor-walker whisks away the sheet and there is a mad scramble in which everyone grabs the costume nearest to her. The little woman who said that she wanted black serge is seen vanishing into the fitting-room with a flesh-coloured broad-cloth trimmed with green brocade. The stout lady triumphantly bears off a 34 and the racks are left

bare as apple-trees in December. But the wise woman doesn't go disconsolately away. She waits patiently while the ill-assorted costumes drift back from the fitting-rooms. Possibly the very suit that pleased her fancy may reappear, or she may find it a day or two later, for in this shop you can exchange everything except veils and hair-goods, and she who buys in haste is apt to repent at leisure. But we hope, for her soul's sake, that she will have had luck. The ideal costume that everyone is seeking is a very expensive model greatly reduced, and if she finds one which satisfies her desires, she will never be content to pay a proper value for her purchases, but will become a confirmed bargain hunter, prowling about the shops in season and out of season, always pursuing her ideal!



A real bargain would have drawn a crowd.

A LARGE department store is more a part of the public life of a city than its library. It is a social institution. It provides exhibitions of art, it furnishes music. Under its roof is a circulating library, and lectures on period furniture, instructions in embroidery, and demonstrations of cooking are given free to all. It provides rest rooms, furnishes note paper, minds your babies, looks after parcels, posts and registers your letters, and offers you every banking facility. For many women shopping has ceased to be an economic function and has become a dissipation. There is excitement in moving amongst scenes of more than oriental splendour, gay colours, rich materials, sparkling jewels, and the odour of perfumery,

flowers or coffee. There is a pleasure in trying on costly hats and gowns, which you are under no obligation to buy or which you may return next day. Even the arrogant saleslady is becoming a thing of the past, for the public will flock to the stores where courteous attention is the rule and the seller will usually fetch the tenth suit for trying-on with mechanical patience, and evince no surprise when you end by telling her you were "just looking."

SPECIALISTS declare that the practice of exchanging goods adds ten per cent. to the normal price. But for all this somebody must pay, and the woman who chooses wisely and once for all is no richer than the woman who keeps on exchanging things. Neither is the woman who carries her parcels better off than she who charges a spool of thread and has it delivered in the suburbs.

Perhaps the woman who benefits most is the one who makes use of the expert shopper provided by the store free of charge, or orders her goods from a catalogue. Luxurious shopping is the thief of time and money, and the country woman accomplishes far more than the city woman, for she is removed from the temptations daily offered by the stores. At least she does not make the rounds of five different shops before deciding on five yards of dress material.

If women are to take an equal share with men in the work of the world, they must shake off the tyranny of Dress! The waste of energy, time and thought expended in clothes is terrifying. If a woman starts on a journey, goes to a concert or plays golf, she must first see whether she has anything to wear suitable for the occasion, and then begins a round of shopping. Women from the highest to the lowest are enslaved by Dress. Only those who have adopted a uniform or standardized clothes may be called free, and so long as we submit to the ever-changing fashions, we cannot claim to be equal to men, who many years ago shook off the burden of elaborate costumes, flimsy materials and fleeting fashions.

