

National Council of Women of the United States. Committee on Dress
Report of Committee on Dress made to the Executive Board of the National Council of Women, Dec. 14-15, 1892 [with] Mrs. Stowe's Appeal to Women in 1866 [with] Note

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN

of the

UNITED STATES

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REPORT OF
COMMITTEE ON DRESS.

First Edition, 5,000, Mar., 1893.

First edition. Octavo. [12]pp. Illustrated. Stapled printed self-wrappers. Light vertical crease, slight splits at the spine ends, else near fine. Illustrated report on sensible dress for enlightened women, signed in type by Francis E. Willard, Susan B. Anthony, Grace Greenwood, Anna H. Shaw, Clara Barton, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and others and further endorsed in the text by Lucy Stone, Charlotte Perkins Stetson, and many more. [With] *Mrs. Stowe's Appeal to Women in 1866.*

Printed both sides of a single octavo leaf, reprinted from Stowe's *Chimney Corner Papers* a brief essay on dress apparently meant to accompany this pamphlet. Endorsed at the conclusion by Alice Freeman Palmer and Mary A. Livermore. Faint vertical crease, else fine. [With] *Note*. Printed on recto only of a single octavo leaf, recommending the designs in the pamphlet as a template for dress, and discussing some details, apparently meant to accompany this pamphlet. The *Note* is signed in type by "F.E.R.", apparently Frances E. Russell, who headed the Committee on Dress. Faint vertical crease, else fine. OCLC locates some digital and microform copies of *Report of Committee on Dress made to the Executive Board of the National Council of Women, Dec. 14-15, 1892*, but only two physical copies (over two records; Oberlin and NYPL), with one mentioning the presence of *Mrs. Stowe's Appeal to Women in 1866*, neither mentioning whether *Note* is present. Neither of the two leaflets appear to have separate OCLC listings. [BTC#424122]



This costume, worn by Bertha Morris Smith upon the platform at a noon meeting of the National W. C. T. U. at Denver, in November, 1892, was very much admired. The whole suit is made of navy blue serge, but any firm material is suitable.

Syrian Costume.

FRONT VIEW.

BACK VIEW.



If made in one piece with the waist (either by carrying the front of the skirt to the shoulder without cutting at the waist, or by sewing waist and skirt together) the skirt should open by two short plackets in the fulness at the back, with a short band between to button to the waist. In front it may open at one side or by a short placket in the front fullness.

Soft light-weight material is suitable for this skirt. When made to wear under a dress, less fulness may be used.

An outer garment to wear over a scant Syrian skirt may be something like the Russian blouse made longer, an easy-fitting princess gown, or something suggested by graceful ulster or sleeved cloak patterns.

The Gymnasium Dress.

BACK VIEW.

FRONT VIEW.



The suit here given requires no special pattern ; the fronts are cut in one piece from shoulder to knee ; it buttons in front under the fulness. In the back, the waist is separated from the trousers, buttoning together at the waist-line under the girdle, and with one button for each side placket, in a band under, where it is not seen.

This costume is recommended for house wear for women engaged in very active occupations, and will be found a great relief from long skirts. On slender figures it is really beautiful.

NOTE.—The trouser pattern given with Butterick's Gymnasium Costume (No. 4024) is very satisfactory, except that it is wider than necessary. Many will prefer this to the Syrian as a pattern for a dual skirt, and it is a pattern which all can obtain.

The American Costume.

FRONT VIEW.

BACK VIEW.



This costume is so easily made that it calls for no special directions. It demands leggins, which should be made of material the same color as the gown.

Mrs. Stowe's Appeal to Women in 1866.

[With the "cordial consent" of Houghton, Mifflin & Co., we reprint the following from Mrs. Stowe's Chimney Corner Papers, with added emphasis.

It is the great misfortune of the civilized world, at the present hour, that the state of morals in France is apparently at the lowest ebb, and consequently the leadership of fashion is entirely in the hands of a class of women who could not be admitted into good society in any country. Women who can never have the name of wife,—who know none of the ties of family,—these are the dictators whose dress and equipage and appointments give the law, first to France, and through France to the civilized world. Such was the confession of Monsieur Dupin, made in a late speech before the French Senate, and acknowledged, with murmurs of assent on all sides, to be the truth. This is the reason why the fashions have such an utter disregard of all those laws of prudence and economy which regulate the expenditures of families. They are made by women whose sole and only hold on life is personal attractiveness, and with whom to keep this up, at any cost, is a desperate necessity. No moral quality, no association of purity, truth, modesty, self-denial, or family love, comes in to hallow the atmosphere about them, and create a sphere of loveliness which brightens as mere physical beauty fades. The ravages of time and dissipation must be made up by an unceasing study of the arts of the toilet. Artists of all sorts, moving in their train, rack all the stores of ancient and modern art for the picturesque, the dazzling, and the grotesque; and so, lest these Circes of society should carry all before them, and enchant every husband, brother and lover, the staid and lawful Penelopes leave the hearth and home to follow in their triumphal march and imitate their arts. Thus it goes in France; and in England, virtuous and domestic princesses and peeresses must take obediently what has been decreed by their rulers in the *demi monde* of France; and we in America have leaders of fashion who make it their pride and glory to turn New York into Paris, and to keep even step with all that is going on there. So the whole world of womankind is really marching under the command of these leaders. The love of dress and glitter and fashion is getting to be a morbid, unhealthy epidemic, which really eats away the nobleness and purity of women.

In France, as Monsieur Dupin, Edmond About and Michelet tell us, the extravagant demands of love of dress lead women to contract debts unknown to their husbands, and sign obligations which are paid by the sacrifice of honor, and thus the purity of the family is continually undermined. In England there is a voice of complaint, sounding from the leading periodicals, that the extravagant demands of female fashion are bringing distress into families, and making

NOTE.

The designs offered with this report are not intended for exact copying, but are given, *without patterns*, simply as suggestions.

They are variations of two ideas—the short skirted gown, and the skirt divided and closed dually below the knees. A jacket is not an essential part of any one of the styles offered, and in each case any other style of jacket might be substituted. The yoke in one case, the sash in another, and the fitted vest, are matters of taste, easily changed. So, also, of the humps on the shoulders—a passing fashion, which none of us would deliberately “recommend.”

It was by a mistake that the diagram of the partly made Syrian skirt was published (as sent us from England) after the discovery that cutting the gore from the front and back breadths necessitates massing the fullness too much directly in front and behind, in order to conceal the divisions. Butterick's pattern for the gymnasium trousers is better. Only by experimenting can we learn the best length and fullness for this modest and useful style of skirt, and the most satisfactory use of gores and fastenings.

Those who object to the long, close leggings given with the two illustrations of the American costume can substitute shoes made a few inches higher than common high shoes, meeting the bottoms of a scant dual skirt.

We are not objecting to a dress of any length preferred by the wearer—for suitable occasions. But women who wish to be healthy and useful need a convenient dress.

If any one should say that the styles offered would be “too conspicuous,” we must remind her that the great object of this united effort is to secure a dress for the activities of woman's life “which will allow her the free and healthful use of the organs of her body”—her organs for walking and for working, as well as her internal organs.

Such a dress must necessarily be so short—in order to escape contact with stairs—as to be “conspicuous” in solitary cases. Numbers only can overcome this objection.

For this reason we ask those who wish well to this movement not to sit waiting to see what will be done, but to unite with others in your own vicinity and organize some movement to get suits made this spring—for our congress at the World's Fair, if possible, or for summer outings, or walking clubs and picnics.

It has been suggested that entertainments should be given by societies and clubs, where the “first appearance” of the members in handsome and becoming short suits should be one of the attractions. These might help our cause and the finances of the society at the same time.

To the members of women's clubs and other societies of women who have so readily signed our enrollment of those “willing to help,” and to the alumnae and students of women's colleges, other women look for help in this effort to relieve us from oppression.

In the second week in May some of us will meet at Chicago, and at the same time Nature will be calling her friends to the woods and fields, and if every patriotic and humane person will now “lend a hand” to popularize a tasteful short dress for women, a good work for the relief of the burdened may be quickly and quietly accomplished.

F. E. R.