

CHAPTER XII

AN EFFICIENT EQUIPMENT FOR DRESSMAKING

DRESSMAKING, like any other form of work, will give the best results when it is done with the best equipment. "Best" does not mean the most expensive. A three-dollar pine table of the right height and size for sewing and cutting is a better table for dressmaking than a fifty-dollar mahogany sewing-table just big enough to hold your scissors and work-basket.

THE SEWING-ROOM. Every woman who sews or who has sewing done at home should have a light, well-equipped sewing-room. It need not be large, but it should have a good light by day and the artificial light should be properly placed and shaded. The floor should be covered by a clean sheet or linen druggert—sometimes called a crum-cloth. This covering keeps light-colored material from becoming soiled, and also enables you to leave the sewing-room in perfect order at the end of the day, for all the scraps and threads can be picked up in the cloth.

The room should be furnished with comfortable, straight chairs and a table large enough to lay out a skirt or coat for cutting and sewing. If it is a regular sewing-table you can keep your shears, pins, etc., in the drawer. The table should have a smooth, hard, even surface and should be of comfortable height, so that you can sit at it with your feet under it as you would sit at a writing-table. Never sew with your work on your lap. It makes you sit in a fatiguing position, strains your eyes and back, and stretches and crum-

ples your work. Lay your sewing on the table, letting the table support its weight. A big chest of drawers is useful. Keep one drawer for buttons, boxes, hooks and eyes, bones, etc., another for patterns and a third for left-over pieces of materials. Keep all pieces of material as long as the garment is in use, in case you wish to mend or alter it. There should be hooks on the wall, coat and skirt hangers, and a silkoline curtain to draw over dresses, etc., that are left hanging overnight.

SHEARS AND SCISSORS. Dressmaking shears should be about nine or ten inches long. Never use scissors for cutting. The shears should be kept well sharpened so that they will cut a clean, even edge and not fret and chew the material. The best shears for dressmaking are known as the "bent" shears. (Fig. 174.) They are

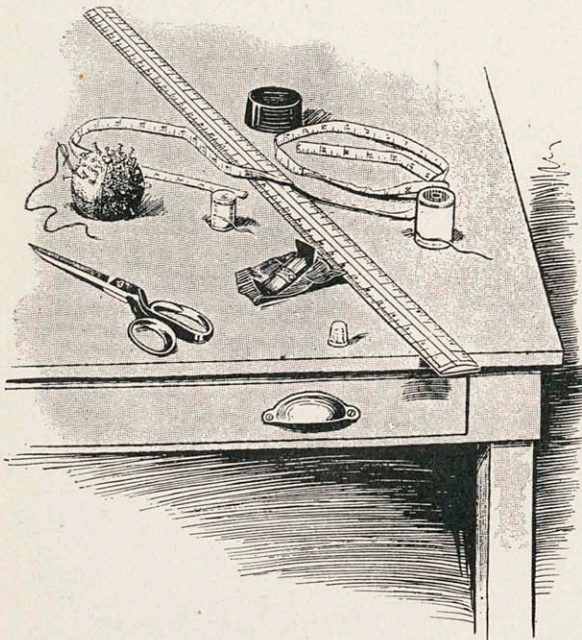


Fig. 174. The Sewing Equipment

bent in this way so as to raise the material as little as possible in cutting and so prevent the under layer from slipping in cutting two thicknesses of material. A good pair of bent shears can be had for a dollar and a quarter. Do not buy a cheap, poor pair. Good steel will last for many years. Do not use your shears for cutting threads, etc. You will need a pair of scissors and also a pair of buttonhole scissors.

WEIGHTS. When your material is laid out smoothly on the table for cutting it should be held in place by four round iron weights weighing one or two pounds. (Fig. 174.) You can get them at the stationer's and they cost about fifteen cents apiece. Or you can use the same sort of weights you use for your kitchen scales.

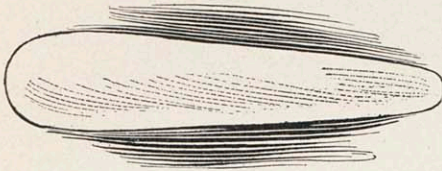


Fig. 174A. The Sleeve-board

should be used on silk or any material that will mark. Never push a pin through a fabric. Use the points only and take up as little of the material as possible.

You will need a thimble that fits correctly, needles of all sizes, basting cotton, different colored cottons for marking tailor's tacks, chalk, a yard-stick and a tape-measure. Learn to use your tape-measure accurately, for one of the points of fine dressmaking is the difference between an eighth of an inch and a quarter, a quarter of an inch and three-eighths.

IRONS. You should have either an electric iron and two ordinary irons, or else three ordinary irons. The two extra irons are used to hold the third in an inverted position in steaming velvet. An eight-pound smoothing-iron is the most satisfactory type for pressing.

IRONING-BOARD. Skirts and coats can be pressed on your long laundry ironing-board or on your sewing-table. Seams should be pressed over the curved edge of an ironing-board so that the seam edges will not be marked on the garment.

A **SLEEVE-BOARD** which can be used for sleeves and short seams can be made from a board two or three feet long, and tapering from five or six inches in width at one end to three inches at the other. (Fig. 174A.) The ends and edges should be rounded and the board should have an inner covering of flannel or a similar wool material, and an outer cover of smooth cotton cloth. (Fig. 174A.)

A **TAILOR'S CUSHION** is used for pressing darts and curved seams. (Fig. 174B.) It is ham shaped and is stuffed tightly with cotton rags. Cut two pieces, eighteen by fourteen inches, making them narrower at one end. (Fig. 174B.) Round off all the edges. Stitch the seam with a close stitch.

THE SEWING-MACHINE should be of a good, reliable make. You will get full directions with it, and in using it be careful to observe the correct tension, length of stitch, etc. Tucking and gathering, etc., can be done on a machine.

THE DRESS-FORM. It is necessary in dressmaking to have a perfect duplicate of your own figure on which you can try your clothes as you make them.

Buy a dress-form one size smaller than your bust measure. If you have a thirty-six-inch bust, buy a thirty-four-inch dress-form. It should have an extension stand that can be lowered to your skirt length. The stand should be on casters so that you can move it around and turn it easily. It is

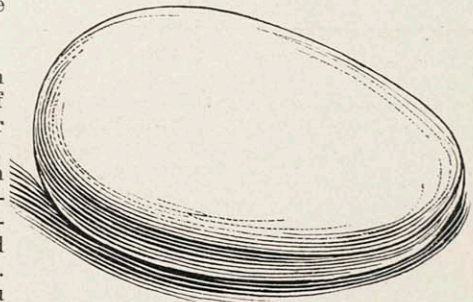


Fig. 174B. The Tailor's Cushion



Fig. 175. The Padded Dress-Form

Make up the single sleeve you cut with the rest of the princess lining, following the directions given with the pattern. Baste it into the lining and try it on to be sure that it is the right length and sets comfortably on the arm. Fit the sleeve as close to the arm as possible. Then rip the sleeve out, leaving the gathers at the top. Stitch and press open the sleeve seams.

Baste the collar to the right-hand side of the lining, try on to be sure that it is the right size, and then stitch it to the right side of the lining. The collar closing is at the center back and the lower edge on the left side will be sewed to the lining later, three-eighths of an inch below the neck edge of the lining.

Stitch the fronts about an eighth of an inch back of each fold edge. Put the lining on, pin the fronts evenly together and have some one turn up the lower edge of

not necessary for you to have a wire skirt frame.

Buy a princess lining, buying it by your bust measure. If you are long or short waisted, round-shouldered or over-erect or have any other slight peculiarity of physique, alter your pattern according to the instructions in Chapter XIV, "The Use of Butterick Patterns."

Cut the princess lining from unbleached muslin or natural-colored linen or duck. The material should be of a firm, strong quality so that it will not stretch and it should be thoroughly shrunken before it is used. In cutting the lining out, cut one sleeve.

Lay the pattern on the material, following the directions given on the pattern envelope. Pin it on carefully and cut, following the edges of the pattern exactly. Clip the notches distinctly but not too deeply, and mark the working perforations with tailor's tacks, using different-colored cottons for the different-size perforations.

Put the lining together according to the illustrated instructions given in the pattern, making the closing at the center front.

Try the lining on with the fold edges of the front opening just meeting.

The lining should be tried on directly over your corset so as to get as close a duplicate of your figure as possible. In using the finished dress-form remember that it represents your figure without lingerie. If you wear heavy, clumsy underwear you should put it on the form in fitting. If you wear fine, close-fitting lingerie it will not be necessary to do so, as the lingerie will not alter the size or shape. Pin the fronts carefully and be sure that the neck edges are even.

Make the necessary alterations at the outlet seams, fitting the lining very carefully. Be sure to have the neck and armhole exactly right. Remove the lining and if you make any alterations baste them in and try on the lining once more to be sure that it fits perfectly. Stitch the seams through the bastings. If you can't remove them afterward it doesn't matter in this case. Press the seams open. It is not necessary to bind, or overcast or bone them. Run a strong basting around the armholes and neck to keep them from stretching.

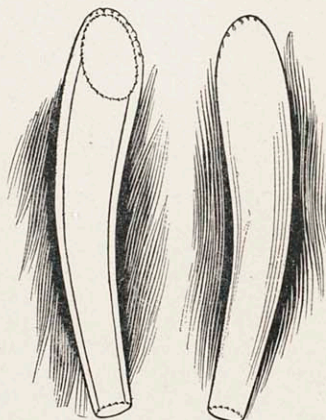


Fig. 176. The Padded Sleeve Lining

the lining. (See Chapter XXI, Skirts.) Take the lining off and face it with a bias facing three inches wide, stitching the upper edge of the facing flat to the lining.

Mark the waistline by a line of colored thread through the waistline perforations.

Place the lining on the dress-form, leaving the front edges open temporarily. Pad between the lining and the form with tissue-paper, cotton rags or wadding until it fits perfectly. Be careful in padding not to stretch or draw the lining or to let the padding get in bunches. Pack it until the front edges just meet and then pin them together. Then sew them with an overhand stitch. (Fig. 175.) If you have prominent or uneven hips or a round abdomen, place the wadding where it is needed. When you pad below the waistline, pin the wadding to the form so that it will not slip. When you have padded the front out to its right proportions, turn up the lining and cover the padding at the hips with a thin piece of lining material, tacking the covering to the dress-form.

Fell the left side of the collar in place and overhand its back edges together.

Place a piece of lining material inside each armhole, turn in the armhole edges three-eighths of an inch and fell them to it. (Fig. 175.)

For a figure that varies quite decidedly from the average it is better to use a special dress-form. Alter your pattern and make up the lining as described in the earlier part of this chapter. Send your finished lining to a firm that makes dress-forms and have a special form made from it, but a size smaller than your lining. When you get the form, put the lining on it and pad it as already described.

Or a woman of this type of figure can get an adjustable dress-form. Get it a size smaller, adjust it to represent your figure, cover it with your lining and pad it as directed here.

A woman who sews for a number of people will have to use an adjustable form with a fitted lining for each person she sews for. Mark these linings distinctly with name of the person for whom it was made. The form will have to be adjusted and padded each time a lining is used.

In using a dress-form, the skirt can be put on the form and the form placed on the table. It is easier to work with in this position.

In fitting a coat the form should be dressed with the waist and skirt over which the coat will be worn.

THE SLEEVE-FORM. Take the finished sleeve of the lining and pad it firmly and evenly. Place a piece of lining material over the padding at the wrist, turn in the wrist edges three-eighths of an inch, and fell them to the piece of material. (Fig. 176.)

Slip a piece of lining material in the armhole of the sleeve. Turn in the edge of the under portion of the sleeve three-eighths of an inch and fell the fold edge to the lining material. (Fig. 176.) Pad the upper part of the sleeve until it looks as nearly as possible like the arm. Turn in the upper edge of the piece of lining three-eighths of an inch and fell it to the upper part of the sleeve. (Fig. 176.)

You can use the sleeve-form for either the right or left arm and you will find it very useful for trimming or draping sleeves.