CHAPTER XXIV
REMODELING

ONE ought, at the very beginning of each season, to set to work to take a critical survey of last year’s wardrobe. It is the easiest way to find out exactly what new clothes are needed and exactly how far one can go with the old ones. Coats, suits and dresses that are still in sound physical condition, but which have grown out of style, should be remade. The remodeling of a pair of sleeves, the recutting of a skirt, will almost always give a new lease of life to a suit, while there are dozens of clever little ways by which one can completely obliterate the date of vintage of a gown.

Decide first what clothes are worth remaking. When the materials are badly worn it is hardly worth while going to any amount of trouble in the way of renovations. But when the material is sound and whole it is little short of criminal not to take advantage of its possibilities.

If one feels inclined to take a little trouble—and with a good dye there is practically no trouble at all—one can completely disguise a last year’s suit or dress by changing it to another color.

DYEING is a very simple thing, but there are certain hard and fast rules in regard to it that must not be disregarded. In the first place you can not dye a silk or wool material with a dye intended for cotton and linen. Neither can you dye cotton and linen with a silk and wool dye. In the second place, you can’t change dark colors into lighter ones. In the third place, the material must be prepared carefully for the dyeing. If there are any grease spots or stains they should be removed as thoroughly as possible. (Chapter XXV.)

Afterward the material should be washed for two reasons. The first is, that if the material is put into the dye soiled, the dirt will mingle with the dye and the result will be muddy instead of bright and clear. The second is that as much of the old dye should be taken out or “discharged,” as it is called, as possible. Otherwise it will be impossible to predict how the mixture of the two dyes will turn out.

Cottons and silks can be washed in soap and boiling water, but it is not safe to use soap to any great extent on wool materials, as it softens the wool. Boil the materials about half an hour, changing the water as it becomes discolored. Keep up the washing until the water remains clear—a sure sign that all the dye has been discharged that is likely to do any harm.

It is best to dye the material while it is still wet from the washing as it absorbs the dye more readily and more evenly in that condition. Be sure to follow the directions given with the dye you use. A good reliable dye compound will be accompanied by explicit directions, which you must take care to follow. You must be especially careful in picking out a dye that will suit your material. White, of course, can be dyed any color. Pale shades can be dyed darker or changed into other slightly deeper colors. A material of one color dyed with a dye of a second color will emerge from the fray an entirely different shade from either. For instance, if you dye a yellow material with a light blue dye, you will get green; while the same light blue over light red makes purple, and over light green makes peacock. A dark blue dye over brown makes navy blue, and over yellow, bottle green. A brown over blue makes dark brown; over green makes olive brown; over red makes seal brown. There are dozens and dozens of combinations and variations of colors that one can bring out by a clever combination of dye and material. One should go back to the old safeguard of experimenting first and doing the actual business afterward.

After you’ve dyed your material, take it out of the dyeing fluid and hang it up until it is nearly dry. Then rinse it out in clear water to prevent its crocking. If a material
has been dyed black, do not rinse until it has dried thoroughly. It will leave it a better color. If you do not dye your material, clean it carefully. Directions for removing spots, stains, etc., are given in Chapter XXV, "Care of the Clothes."

IN MAKING OVER A WAIST it is sometimes necessary to use new material; but when chemisettes, yokes and half-sleeves are in fashion, you can use net, lace, chiffon, etc. In remodeling a waist or dress, put it on a bust form and stuff out the sleeves with tissue-paper. Look it over to see where it requires alteration. Sleeves and skirts frequently need to be recut. If piecing is necessary, make the seams fall in places where they will not show or where they can be covered with trimming.

If the dress is to be entirely remodeled, rip it apart with a sharp knife or pointed scissors. Do not stretch the material, especially at the neck and armholes. Brush the seams carefully, and remove all clipped threads. If the material has changed color, use it on the reverse side if possible, even if the weave is slightly different.

After the material has been thoroughly freshened—washed, pressed or dyed—lay it out on the new pattern and see if it requires piecing. If necessary, piece the lining so that it will set comfortably. It should be easy across the bust and shoulders, and snug, but not tight, over the waist and hips. In piecing, cut the patches on the same grain of the material as the original garment. Never piece at the neck or armhole with a bias or straight piece of material. Lay the new fabric on the old, following the grain of the latter. Hem the piece down neatly, and cut the garment over by the new pattern.

Put the Lining on, and then drape the outside over it after you have cut it according to your pattern. By using fancy trimming-pieces, collars, yokes, plaistrons, etc., you can almost always remodel a waist so that the piecing will never show. Lace or net for yokes, chemisettes, etc., can be dyed the color of the dress either at home or at a regular dyeing establishment. Lace can be dipped in tea to give it a rich cream color that can be made lighter or darker according to the strength of the tea.

REMODELING A SKIRT is an easy matter if the new pattern is narrower than the old skirt. In that case it is only a question of recutting; but if the pattern calls for more material than you have in the skirt itself, you will have to do some piecing. Braided bands covering the skirt seams are an excellent way of increasing the width of a skirt. Or you can raise the skirt at the waistline, refit it, and add to it at the bottom by a band or a fold. Or it may be pieced at the bottom and the line of piecing covered by wide braid, bias bands, etc.

Linen or Piqué Skirts can often be lengthened by bands of embroidery insertion or by bias bands of the material. These skirts are very apt to shrink around the hips. They should be ripped from their belts, raised and refitted. They will have to be lengthened.

Coats should be remodelled by an up-to-date pattern. If they require piecing, try to let it come at a seam and cover it with a stitched or braided band. Quite frequently it is easier to cut a coat suit down for one of the daughters of the house than to remodel it for the mother. But do not use a material that is old and somber for a child, without relieving it by a trimming that is bright and youthful-looking. A black-and-white pin-checked wool or a dark serge is apt to make a dull frock for a little girl, but if it is trimmed with bands of contrasting material in a suitable color it becomes childish-looking and pretty.

In making over half-worn garments into presentable and at the same time durable clothes for boys, such as suits, reefer, and overcoats, a tailored finish is the first requirement. It means neat work, even stitching and careful pressing. For the pressing you will need heavy irons, evenly heated, and a piece of unbleached muslin that can be dampened and laid over your work.

In ripping apart the old coat or suit that is to be remodeled for your little son, notice carefully all the small devices of interlining, canvas and stitching that the tailor used in making the garment. You can repeat many of them in your own work. If you use the old canvas and find that it has grown limp, you can restiffen it by dampening it thoroughly and ironing it with a heavy iron thoroughly heated. Full directions for making boys' trousers are given in Chapter XXIII, "Boys' Suits," and Chapter XX, "Pockets." Chapter XXII, on "Coats and Jackets," will give you all the necessary information you want for finishing the jackets or overcoats.