CHAPTER VI

GOWNS FOR EVENING WEAR

In choosing colours for evening wear it is advisable to see the effect by artificial light before making a final selection. Some colours change their tone entirely, and a tint that appears charming in the morning sunshine may be most unbecoming under electric light.

Bear in mind that all materials require different treatment; some fabrics are sufficient unto themselves and need no trimming. Velvets come in this category, when trimmings, other than valuable lace, should be used with a sparing hand. Except in this connection, lace appears to the best advantage when draped over ninon, georgette, silk net, or any other fabrics of that ilk. Lace worn over a definite material loses the diaphanous effect which the maker strove so hard to create.

The choice of an evening dress opens up a host of possibilities for beauty: no other frock presents the same opportunities for the happy combination of colour.

A study of the methods in colour amalgamation practised by the Old Masters will be helpful to the modern dressmaker, and an hour or two spent in a big picture gallery will bear fruit in the surer handling of tints.

Brocades or any figured materials require careful trimming, but charmeuse, plain satins, silks, nets, and georgette present splendid opportunities for the work lover.

Beading has never been so popular. Iridescent beads are worked in intricate designs on fabrics; hanging tassels and fringes are made of them; they are also used in lieu of the shoulder strap.
Silk net over ninon is a happy choice for a dance frock, or georgette over crêpe-de-chine. When selecting a transparent material, remember that the diaphanous atmosphere should be maintained throughout, and this can only be achieved by fashioning the lingerie of clinging fabrics in keeping with the theme.

It is a mistake to make up sheer materials over a satin or stiff silk foundation which gives a hard effect foreign to the nature of the covering fabric. Three or four layers of ninon and lace, if worn over crêpe-de-chine underwear, will make an adequate protection for even the ultra modest, and the effect will delight the fastidious.

Taffeta, poplin, and allied silks should depend upon an old-world austerity of treatment to be thoroughly in the mode. Ruchings and flat rosettes made of the same silk or of picot-edged ribbon are among the trimmings in keeping.

Dresses are very often cut in one piece, but if the skirt is to be attached separately, it is frequently made of an entirely straight length of silk, cut from the width of the material. In following this plan, the selvage is used in lieu of a hem at the bottom of the skirt, and of course only one seam is necessary, which imparts a lighter and neater appearance. Silks and satins assume softer folds when cut thus or on a bias. Double-width fabrics are wide enough to make the skirt for all but the exceptionally tall.

First the desired width at the hem should be decided upon, and the material cut off at that point. Fold the material so that the only seam will come in the least noticeable place. Determine the centre of the front, and make the correct measurement of skirt length at this point, marking the height from the selvage on the fabric. At the centre of the back add another one and a half inches to this measurement, and mark the material accordingly. Place either end of a yard ruler on both
these points, and rule a line with chalk or wheel, then cut off the surplus fabric above this line. The cut edge is the top of the skirt and will eventually be gathered up to fit the bodice. Especial accuracy in measuring for this type of skirt is essential, as all alterations will have to be made from the top in order to preserve the selvage. It will be remembered that the bodice must be cut on the width of the material, so that the same grain is sustained throughout the garment. Some fabrics do not lend themselves to this treatment—the suitability of the plan must be left to the judgment of the worker. Generally speaking, it is an admirable method for georgette, ninon, and similar materials.

If you have bought a straight gored skirt pattern which is too short, but fits in other respects, the extra inches may be added by pinning the bottom of the pattern to an extension of paper. Make a cardboard gauge measuring the number of inches lacking, place one end against the bottom of the pattern, and pencil the limit of the other end on the paper extension. Do this all round the lower edge of the pattern, then cut along the pencilled line. This is an accurate and easy way of measuring. If the pattern needs shortening, a similar gauge may be used from the bottom upwards and the superfluous paper cut off. Alterations made in this manner are only possible when the skirt has a very easy fit.

A cord finish makes a good termination for a skirt cut in the usual way from lengthwise material, as it obviates the necessity of the hem, which is apt to show through fine material, even if the stitches are of the most minute description. This finish also demands judgment in its placing, as it is not suitable for every type of material. It is seen to the best advantage on brocades, satins, and like fabrics, especially if the cord edge is employed on the remainder of the gown.

Picot edging is perhaps the most ideal finish for evening materials. If this is decided upon, the garment must be
taken to a sewing-machine firm or a frilling establish-
ment specialising in such work, where it will be under-
taken for a trifling sum. Picot edging is merely machine 
hemstitching cut in half. The line where the stitching 
is to be made should be indicated by lines of tack 
threads of the same colour as the fabric. This is an 
important point, because the tacking thread cannot 
be removed, as so doing would tear the hem stitching 
(Fig. 66, p. 49).

In pressing silks no water should be used, as it would 
probably leave a stain. In the case of taffeta, glacé, 
and stiff silks generally, no heat must be applied, as it 
would take all the stiffness out of them. Seams can be 
pressed flat with the edge of a coin or any hard surface. 
Steel pins are best to secure silks and velvets, as 
ordinary pins mark and leave holes in these materials. 
Very fine needles and silk thread should be used for 
tacking, as silk thread marks less than cotton. When 
taking out, cut every third stitch, and pull out 
separately. Pulling long threads will scar or tear 
delicate fabrics.

Lining bodices should be made of light-weight satin, 
China silk, ninon, or net. In colour the lining should 
match the frock if the latter is made of transparent 
material, or the line of demarcation will be noticeable. 
If the fabric of the gown is of thicker manufacture, the 
lining may be of white or flesh colour.

As the lining is the foundation of the dress, it should 
be made before the outside of the garment is com-
menced. In the case of slight figures, the lining may 
be quite a loose affair, but if the figure is a full one or 
with any irregularities, the instructions on and from 
page 25 should be studied before proceeding.

In cutting the lining it is best to place the pattern on 
the width of the silk and not lengthwise; this is more 
extravagant in cutting, but the give of the fabric is less 
between selvages and the method is satisfactory for
a lining where the strain is great, and thus liable to pull the material out of shape.

In the fashion of the moment linings hang quite loose from the figure and extend below the normal waist line, but, if preferred, they may be finished at the waist by attaching to a silk petersham belt or by a casing sewn to the bottom of the bodice which encloses an elastic finish.

Making up Lining.—All turnings and perforations should be marked in tailors' tacks (p. 20) and not by the tracing wheel; the latter is likely to weaken the durability of the silk at the seam lines. The joins in net or ninon linings should be made in French seams (p. 34), but seams in silk, or satin should be sewn in the usual way, opened out, and the edges very finely overcast, turning the raw edges just under (p. 18). The under arm and shoulder seams should be tacked first, and then the darts if there are any. When nearing the pointed termination of the latter, the stitching should curve inwards, going up to the point in the opposite direction (Fig. 92); this prevents the puckered look so often seen at the end of a dart. Fit the lining on before finally sewing. If possible, the fastenings should come in the front for evening gowns; this will make you entirely independent of help in fastening and unfastening the dress. Sometimes the design or trimming makes this impossible, and a back fastening will be compulsory.

The lining turnings at openings should be folded over inch-wide strips of muslin, and a line of stitching run an eighth of an inch inside the edge. Hooks should be spaced one and a half inches apart and be sewn well inside the edge on the right-hand side of lining. Spread the back of each hook well apart, so that they will lie flat;
sew through the two rings and round the bend of the bill, taking the stitches right through the silk to make the sewing firm. In attaching the eyes to the left side, care must be taken to place them to exactly correspond with the hooks on the opposite edge. If the lining is a tight-fitting one, hooks and eyes are sometimes placed alternately (Fig. 93); this fastening is considered more secure, but sewing the hooks on one side and the eyes on the other is a simpler way, and usually quite satisfactory. Both the hooks and the eyes should be faced with lute ribbon or a strip of its own silk. Oversew the facing to the edge of the bodice, and hem down to lining beyond the rings of the hooks and eyes, so that only the loop of the eye and the bill of the hook extend beyond the facing (Fig. 94).

In making a low-necked bodice it is better to cut the
lining right up to the neck for fitting, and then cut away the surplus material—a much better fit will be the result. Should the pattern be a tight one, the darts should be cut to within half an inch of the top, opened out, the edges trimmed and very neatly overcast. In the case of a tight lining for a full figure, notch the seams at the waist line, and two or three times above and below to make them lie flat.

A camisole lining is very usual for evening gowns, and it should terminate in a line with the under part of the arm (Fig. 95). Straps of ribbon or lace are attached in lieu of the ordinary shoulder piece, and the top of the camisole finished with lace or a casing for fine elastic or ribbon. Should the model be a straight one, the lining will probably extend almost to the hips, and the top of the skirt will be attached to the lining at this point. The join should be neated on the inside with lute ribbon. For a normal waist line the inside belt should be made of silk petersham of the same colour as the lining, or stout corded ribbon. Make it two inches longer than your waist measure-
ment, and turn under an inch at either end. Sew three or four hooks to come on the right hand, and corresponding eyes at the other end, neaten with lute ribbon facing. The lining should be attached to the outside of the belt, and the raw edges neatened by sewing a narrow flat facing of ribbon over them (Fig. 96).

If an elastic is to be used at the waist, a casing should be made of a strip of bias silk turned in at the edges. The lower edge of lining should be turned up at the traced line, the edge of the casing oversewn to it, and the other edge of casing hemmed to lining. The casing should be just wide enough to easily cover half-inch silk elastic (Fig. 97). The latter should not be run in until the dress is finished.

In making the material bodice, great attention must be paid to the method of fastening so that it is invisible. Trimmings or drapery can be arranged in such a way that the opening is completely camouflaged, but the severely simple dress presents greater difficulties. If the frock is of very loose design, it can be slipped on over the head, thus doing away with any fastenings at all, but the style does not always permit this easy way out.

If an absolutely seamless back and front are desired, the problem is solved by fastening the bodice on the left shoulder and along the joining seam under the left arm. The fastenings must be neatly done to make this a success. A good way is to finish off the shoulder, arm-hole, and under arm of the front piece with fine piping cord. This piping should be covered with a bias strip of the same silk, and the front bodice edge sewn to it at turning lines. The upper portions of small stud fasteners should be sewn at inch intervals to lute ribbon;
one edge should be slipstitched to shoulder and under arm on the inside of the cord finish, the other edge of ribbon should be caught to material as invisibly as possible. The round of the armhole will not need fasteners, it will keep its position (Fig. 98).

The armhole of the back piece should be finished with a covered piping cord to correspond, and the shoulder and under arm must be strengthened by lute ribbon placed against the wrong side of material edge; the ribbon and cut edge to be finely overcast together. The under portions of the stud fasteners must be sewn to shoulder and under arm of material back piece on the traced line, through fabric and ribbon, great care being taken that they correspond with the other halves on the front of the bodice. Naturally, the neck and other armhole will be finished with a similar piping to match. The cut edges of bias piping silk round the armholes should be finely overcast.

**Plackets** for light fabrics are not made in the usual way, as any stitches showing through to the right side would be objectionable.

Take a strip four inches wide and twice the length of the placket. Place one edge against the opening, right sides facing, and tack continuously to both edges of slit an eighth of an inch outside the traced line. Now run a narrow seam, taking it almost to a point at the base of the opening. Turn under the remaining edge, and slip stitch down to seam. One side of this continuous strip is extended to form the lower lap of the placket, and the other is folded back at the stitched line to
make the upper (Fig. 99). When the placket is closed it is invisible from the right side (Fig. 100). Small stud fasteners may be used to close, or hooks may be sewn to the upper section of placket, and blind loops (p. 63) made on the under to correspond with the hooks.

**Cord Finishings.**—Cord may be inserted in a fold of material (Fig. 101) or it may be covered with a bias strip of the same or contrasting fabric (Fig. 102) and be attached by seaming or hemming to a material edge. The thickness of the cord used will vary according to the texture of the goods: for georgette, crêpe-de-chine, etc., cord of a string-like fineness is most suitable;
heavy-weight fabrics demand a thicker cord. The cord can be obtained in different sizes from any draper's.

A straight or very slightly curved edge may be terminated by placing the cord on the under side of material against the traced line, turning the fabric over, and sewing along close to cord in fine running stitches. Should the curve be great, or if corners are to be negotiated, an applied cord will be needed. If the garment edge requires facing, the bias strip should be cut wide enough to cover the cord, at the same time leaving sufficient surplus material to form the facing. Fold one edge over the cording, so that the top edge is as wide again, and sew along with fine running stitches. Place fold of garment against the narrow edge of facing, so that the cord extends beyond, and attach by straight hemming or slipstitching. Turn under the broad edge of strip and slipstitch down to garment (Fig. 103).

To bind a Scalloped Edge.—Bound scalloped edges are much used for finishing skirts of taffeta and other silks. Mark the scollop design on the
right side of material, and outline it in running stitch; this will prevent the fabric pulling out of shape when cut. Prepare an inch-wide bias strip of sufficient length, and place its edge against the scolloped design, right sides facing; attach by fine running stitches. Cut the material away to the shape, turn facing over, and hem with invisible stitches to the wrong side (Fig. 104).

**Box-Plaited Ruche.**—This is another suitable trimming for stiff silks. Take a strip of material the desired width and three times as long as the finished length should be. The edges can be picoted, pinked, or frayed. The plaits should be folded over to the left and right alternately, and secured by a stitching down the centre (Fig. 105). This plaiting should not be pressed, as it is designed to stand away from the dress.

**A Single Ruche with a Cording.**—Cut a strip of silk of the desired width and as long again as the finished length. Fray the edge and fold in half, placing a cord between, sew the fold into a loose tuck over the cord, making fine running stitches. Gather up to cord as you proceed (Fig. 106). Silk for a frayed ruche has a thicker fringe if cut from the width of the silk rather than from the length; it is best to pull a thread before
cutting, to be certain of a straight line. If the ruche is made of single raw-edged net, it should be cut on the line of the straight threads that run lengthwise or bias. Soft fabrics will take three times the length of the finished ruche, whilst silks of substance need little more than twice the finished length.

A Double Ruche with a Cord.—This strip must be as wide again as the desired width when finished. Fold and tack the material so that both edges meet in the middle. Place cord over these edges, fold in half, and sew in with fine running stitches, gathering material over the cord as you proceed (Fig. 107). A double cord may be used, when each cord should be placed on either side of the central line.

A Puff Ruche with Two Cords.—Cut a strip of silk as wide as required, with widish turning allowances on either edge to form frills. Turn raw edges under at each side so that they will be included in the tuck enclosing the cords. Sew along the cord lines with even running stitches, and gather silk to fit cord (Fig. 108).

A Puff Trimming with Four Cords.—Cut a strip of material of the required width, making allowances for the tucks that will contain the cords. Turn under the raw edges and include in the sewing of the outside cords. The positions of the inside ones will have to be measured by a cardboard gauge. Run with even stitches, catching the under material in the usual way, and gather up to fit. The widths of the puffs and the number of cords can be arranged in various ways. A pretty effect is gained
by having the outside cords thicker than the inner ones (Fig. 109). The trimming is suitable for ornamenting certain types of dresses. It also makes a handsome finish for the edge of a fur coat lining.

**Plain Shirring** consists of rows of gathers placed at regular distances beneath each other. The gathering thread should be strong, with big knots at the ends; the latter must be kept on the under side of the material. The spacing between the lines of gathers should be correctly measured to give a pleasing result, and each stitch should come directly under the one in the previous row (Fig. 110).

**Tuck Shirrings** are made in the same way. Measure the width and position of each parallel tuck with a cardboard gauge (p. 21), sew through both thicknesses with a running stitch, and pull up to size.

**Scalloped Shirring.**—Cut a strip of material double the required width, turn under one edge, and fold so that the join comes in the centre. With a strong thread run a zigzag course from edge to edge, down the length of the strip, and pull up to size (Fig. 111). This trimming should always be a narrow one.
A Plain Ruche.—Fold a strip of material so that the join comes in the centre, turn one edge under, and run a gathering along the fold through all thicknesses and pull up. This is also a narrow trimming.

Marabou Feather Trimming must be sewn on a double fold of silk and so attached to the garment, otherwise it is irritating to handle, and the marabou will have a twisted, bedraggled appearance long before it is secured. The width of the finished foundation strip is regulated by that of the marabou; it must be well inside the margin of the feather, and not be seen from the right side. Fold the strip so that the cut edges overlap each other down the centre. Place the marabou on the table, so that the least good side is uppermost; be sure it lies straight without a twist. Lay the strip of silk on it, so that the cut edges lie even with the stem of the marabou, and pin in position. Sew by taking two or three small stitches through the silk and the stem of the marabou beneath, carry the thread along on the silk for an inch, then take two or three more stitches through the stem (Fig. 112). This trimming should be attached to the garment by sewing down each edge of the silk strip with fine running stitches.

Beading.—Designs are usually carried out in small beads; glass or china ones can be used with an equally happy result. Large beads are more often employed as an edging, where regular spacing is essential to give the best effect.

Transfers are made especially for bead embroidery, the position of each bead being indicated by a dot, but it is difficult to cover even this small point so that it will not show when the work is finished. Benzine will take out transfer ink from cloth or silk, but if you are
embroidering on white satin it is best to stamp the transfer on the wrong side as it is not safe to attempt to remove the marks. This plan makes the work more difficult, but success will be assured.

After stamping, place the part to be beaded in an embroidery frame, this will prevent the thread between the beads at the back of the material being pulled up too tightly. Always use silk thread for bead work and a bead needle.

Artificial Fruit and Flowers play an important part in the making of girdles, trimmings, and hair ornaments for evening wear. These trifles made by the deft fingers of the dressmaker often fit the need better than the most beautiful and expensive examples fashioned by the professional flower-maker, and the cost of the home-made affair is insignificant.

Any bright bits of material can be used; their similarity to nature’s colouring matters not at all, so long as the tone blends or the contrast is a pleasing one. White glacé or taffeta is the best foundation for hand-painted flowers. Each petal can be made of either double or single material; if the former method is chosen, the two shaped pieces should be seamed together at their edges, the base being left open so that the work can be turned right side out. The join should be pressed flat with the fingers; do not use a hot iron, or the silk will become limp. When you have sufficient petals, tint each one with water-colour paint, taking care that the shading blends from light at the top of the petal to a darker tone at the base. Gather each one to give it an inward curve, arrange in position, and fill up the centre of the flower with frayed silk of a dark colour. If the petals are of single thickness, the colouring process is carried out in the same manner, but afterwards the edges should be curled with the back of a knife. Velvet flowers are more difficult to make, and petals must be cut in single material; the edges of the latter are also curled with a
knife, or waved with the tips of a pair of warm curling tongs. All petals may be glued and stiffened with gum arabic, but a needle and cotton is easier to manipulate.

**Roses** of a conventional design can be simply fashioned out of thin silk or gold or silver tissue. Cut four five-inch squares of material, and fold diagonally to form a triangle. Place the four pieces together, the folds to the centre, each piece overlapping the other to half its extent. Run a gathering thread along the outer and cut edges, pull up to form the flower. Curl back each fold to make the petal. The centre should be composed of lengths of coarse silk knotted (Fig. 113).

**Sweet Peas** should be made of mauve or pink ninon, half-inch wide ribbon of darker tone than the material, and lace wire. Each flower is composed of one big petal, two small ones, and a soft ribbon centre. Cut a five-inch length of wire, and shape it like a Japanese fan, twisting the ends of the wire together for two inches to form the stem. Cut a piece of ninon three inches square, fold it in half, and place over the wire foundation, draw the cut edges together at the base, and wind with green silk to secure. Cut two four-inch lengths of wire, and shape them as before, twisting the ends one and three-quarter inches up for the stem. Cover with a couple of two and a quarter inch squares of ninon, and attach at base with
green silk. Bend each of these small petals forward. Make a plaited tuft out of three-quarters of an inch of ribbon, placing the cut edges together. Arrange the two small petals to overlap each other with the ribbon tuft between, place the big petal behind, twist all the wire stems together, covering the latter with twisted green sewing silk. Several sweet peas of varying sizes should be arranged together in a cluster (Fig. 114).

Grapes are made of soft satin, crépe-de-chine, georgette, or thin velvet. Cut many circles of material, two and a half inches in diameter. If the material is of thick texture, the edges of the circles should be whipped and pulled up slightly, and a tight stuffing of cotton-wool pressed well in and worked into an oval shape. A short length of fine wire must be fixed in the wool stuffing, the gathers pulled up tightly and securely finished off. A silk or silver thread should be wound round the termination of the grape to neaten. When several are completed they should be arranged in the formation of a bunch and attached to the girdle (Fig. 115). If georgette or nonin is used, the stuffing should be loose. Tinsel similar to that used on Christmas-trees makes an admirable filling, as it sparkles through the nonin with a very decorative effect. White cotton-wool, loosely packed, is also suitable as a filling. The stems for this type of grape should be of medium thick silver
or gold cord, and should be attached in the same manner as the wire.

**Apples** are made of bright-coloured velvet or crêpe-de-chine over cotton-wool. Cut a circle of single cotton wadding five inches in diameter, and shape this into a round ball by folding under the cut edges and arranging in plaits. Cut a round of material three inches in diameter, turn under the raw edge and run a gathering thread, place over the cotton-wool foundation, draw up the thread, and finish off securely. Thread a needle with dark brown buttonhole twist, make a large knot, insert right through the fruit from the under side, take a stitch and pass needle back to the starting-point, pull up tight to make an indent. Take the needle up again, cross the first stitch, and down again, drawing the thread tight. Do this several times until the stitches at the top of the apple are radiating like the spoke of a wheel (Fig. 116). The bloom should be added with a paint brush dipped in water-colour paint or gold or silver enamel. Fruit can be made of gold or silver tissue instead of coloured silk, in which case no paint should be used.

**Plums.**—Make an oval pattern in paper one and a half inches long and one and an eighth inches wide, and cut out of doubled material, right sides facing. Back-stitch round the curved edge, leaving the lower part open, through which the material should be turned right side out. Fold under the lower edge with running stitches. Fill tightly with cotton-wool, and fix a length
of wire to the filling, then pull up the thread and secure. Wind silk or tinsel thread round the base and the wire stem (Fig. 117).

All these fruits can be amalgamated in one girdle or arranged in a large bunch. The addition of gold or silver tissue leaves will greatly enhance the beauty; these can be obtained in bunches from a good draper. Ordinary wooden beads of a large size make a novel addition if they are dyed purple or green and arranged on wires in bunch formation. The more unusual the materials are, the better the result.

The Girdle itself should be a rather stiff cord, over which is wound silver or gold thread of stout quality. Stitch the thread to one end of the cord, hold the bobbin in the right hand, work from left to right, taking it over and over, unwinding from the bobbin on to the cord with each circular movement. The spirals of thread thus formed must be closely packed together, so that the cord is covered and only the tinsel is seen (Fig. 118). After practice this can be done with great rapidity. The thread must be very securely finished off, or else the spiral will unwind and the work be wasted. If preferred, a coloured chenille may be substituted for the tinsel.
thread. The flowers or fruit can be attached to a single covered cord, but a handsomer effect is gained by twisting two finished cords round each other to simulate the stems of a vine.

**Petticoats** for evening wear should not clash with the colour scheme of the gown. Crêpe-de-chine, soft silk, crêpe morocain or Milanese silk all give a slender, clinging outline. Wide shadow lace finely plaited over ninon makes a delightful finish for a dance skirt; the plaiting is done by machine for a small sum at any plaiting establishment.

Ribbon shoulder straps are best for the evening; a lace insertion to carry ribbon should encircle the camisole top; an additional cinchure of elastic can be run in from behind, so enabling the shoulder straps to be detached if they are not suitable for the style of gown.

Ribbons, beads, and floral trimmings are all fitting embellishments for evening underskirts. The seams are worked in hand veinings (p. 63), machine hem-stitching, or any of the French seams (p. 34).

**Evening Cloaks**

Evening cloaks are usually gay affairs, of flamboyant colouring and no particular fit. In fact, the looser the wrap the better, as then the danger of crushing the dress will be lessened.

A sequin wrap with a large fur or feather collar is a happy choice; painted ninon, crêpe morocain, silk, velvet, or plush are among the many materials suitable for evening wraps. There are no difficulties to be encountered in the making of any of them; the seams will not amount to more than two, and they will be the ordinary seam pressed open. The lining of silk or satin will be slipstitched to the folded edge of the material. If an interlining is added to provide extra warmth (p. 132), the material edge should be catch-stitched to it, and the lining sewn in last.