

## CHAPTER 1

### THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT FOR DRESSMAKING

Sewing-Room, Sewing Equipment, Sewing-Machine, Dress-Form, Sleeve-Form

**D**RESSMAKING, 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.

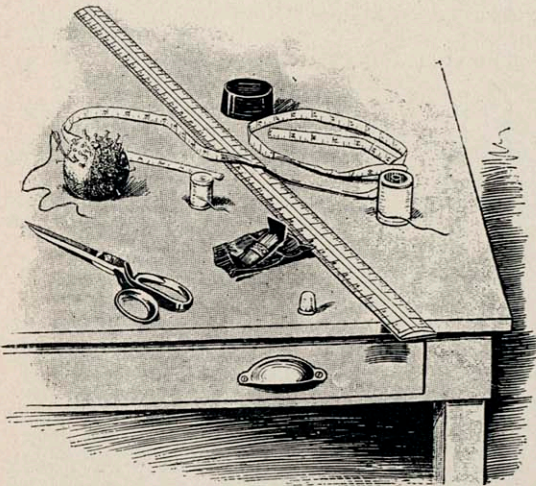
**THE SEWING-ROOM.** Every woman who sews or who has sewing done at home should have a light, well-equipped sewing-room. It need not be large, but it should have a good light by day and the artificial light should be properly placed and shaded. The floor should be covered by a clean sheet or linen drugget—sometimes 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. (Ill. 1.) The table should have a smooth, hard, even surface and should be of comfortable height, so 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 crumples your work. Lay your sewing on the table, letting the table support its weight.

A big chest of drawers is useful, one drawer for buttons, boxes, hooks and eyes, 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



Ill. 1. Sewing Equipment

dressmaking are known as the "bent" shears. (Ill. 1.) They are 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. 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. (Ill. 1.) You can get them at the stationer's. Or you can use the same sort of weights you use for your kitchen scales.

**PINS, NEEDLES, ET CETERA.** Clean, unbent pins are important. Small pins are better than large, and fine steel pins 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 tailors' tacks, tailors' chalk, a yard-stick, emery for polishing needles, 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.

The needle must be in proportion to the thread and to the texture of the material on which it is to be used. It should be just large enough for the thread to slip through the eye easily and heavy enough not to bend when it is put through the material.

Complete information concerning irons and articles for pressing will be found in Chapter 32 "Pressing."

**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, gathering, hemming, binding, etc., can be done on a machine.

**THE DRESS-FORM.** It is necessary in dressmaking at home 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. (Ill. 2.) If you have a thirty-six-inch bust, buy a thirty-four-inch dress-form. The stand should be on casters so that you can move it around and turn it easily. It is not necessary for you to have a wire skirt frame. Buy a waist-lining pattern reaching down to about the hips, buying it by your bust measure. (Chapter 2, pages 10 and 11.)

Cut the 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.

Put the lining together according to the Illustrated Instructions given with the pattern, making the closing at the center front.

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. Dress the form in the lingerie that you usually wear.

Make the necessary alterations at the outlet seams, fitting the lining very carefully.



Ill. 2. Bust-Form

Be sure to have the neck and armhole exactly right. Stitch the seams through the bastings. If you can't remove them afterward, it doesn't matter in this case. Press the seams open. (Chapter 32.) It is not necessary to bind or overcast them. Run a strong basting around the armholes and neck to keep them from stretching, turning the neck edges under three-eighths of an inch.

Make up the single sleeve you cut with the rest of the 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. Stitch and press open the sleeve seams.

Stitch the fronts of the lining about an eighth of an inch back of each fold edge.

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. (Ill. 2.) 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.

Place a piece of lining material inside each armhole, turn in the armhole edges three-eighths of an inch and fell them to it. (Ill. 2.)

**F**OR 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 the name of the person for whom it was made. The form will have to be adjusted and padded each time a lining is used.

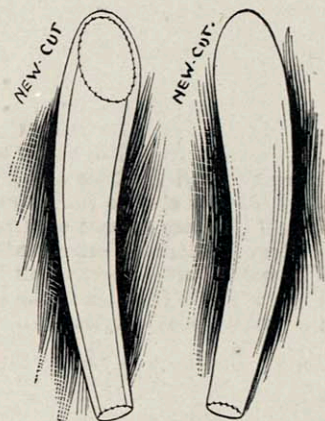
In using a dress-form, the skirt can be put on the form and the form placed on the table. It is easier to work with in this position.

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. (Ill. 3.)

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. (Ill. 3.) 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. (Ill. 3.)

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.



Ill. 3. The Sleeve-Form