TODAY'S STYLE ARBITER IS THE BUSINESS GIRL

She Learns What to Wear and How to Wear It from Her Career

By Kathleen McLaughlin

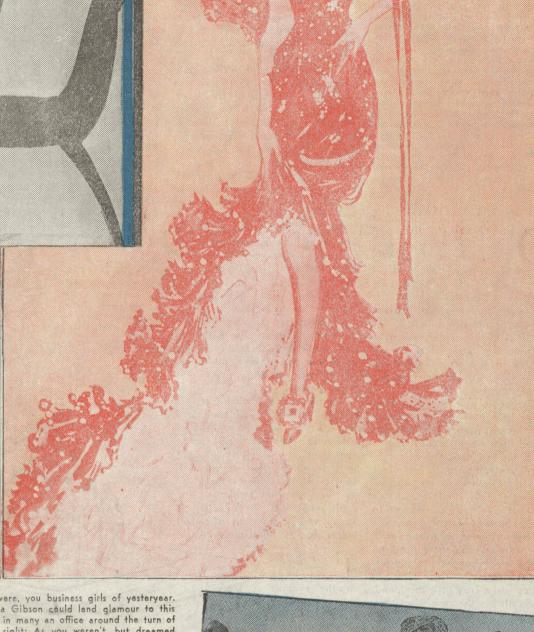
USSOLINI and Mr. Hitler have had their day and their say as feminine fashion autocrats. Both ssued edicts as to what should be worn







atrix and designer, models her own idea of a versatile modern business frock that can trot to almost any event without apology.



This was simple elegance in the nine-ties. Feminine and fetching, but a bit outside the budget of a business girl.



ty scandalous.

by memoers of the weaker sex within their respective realms, and both bumped their noses against the same implacable force that has saddened-and ruined-many a great business mogul in the past, and will again in the future. Here is a sphere where man proposes but woman d'sposes.

Style dictators are not born nor made. They evolve. There are plenty of style originators, but he or she reads a precarious path who sets himself or herself up as capable of swaying wemer's fancy in the matter of what they shall wear and how they shall wear it. They are never singular, because it takes not one woman nor a dozen to se' a style, but hundreds and thousands.

In the current era American business women dictate the majority of contemporary fashions launched each year Casually, even unconsciously they wear the crown that once adorned the placed brow of good Queen Vic, last of the royal tyrants in things sartorial For since the Victorian phase sovereigns have relinquished most or all of the prestige that once attached to their personal adornment, being much more concerned about retaining their diadems than about the angle at which they shall wear

Partly because there are so many of her each dominating an individual income; partly because of her prominence in the scheme of things political and social as well as commercial, the pusiness woman exerts the influence she does on contemporary fashions. Since she is always—or nearly always—in the public eye, whatever she can wear appropriately at her job is apt to be appropriately worn also by women whose job is home making.

It was not ever thus. Back in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when she was tiptoeing into the awesome and puzzling atmosphere of trade with no signposts to guide her and many a blunder to be perpetuated in cruel jokes against her ability, the business girl was anything but a style criterion. Poor dear!

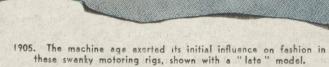
That was the era when Alexander Graham Bell had just invented the telephone, and the typewriter was being installed in offices. These two forerunners of a mechanized office equipment created two new careers, as they were called then-telephone operator and typist. Too trifling to be manned by the masculine element, they were seized upon by the feminine

Presently swarms of typists were setting forth each morning for various offices, attired in stiff uncomfortable mannish costumes they fondly imagined made them look as efficient as their business associates—even if they weren't.

Along about then the business girl's costume difficulties developed. There were

At left: As you were, you business girls of yesteryear. Only Charles Dana Gibson could lend glamour to this uniform, glimpsed in many an office around the turn of the century. At right: As you weren't, but dreamed of looking, what time the Florodora sextet was smash-ing hearts right and left, and "Heaven will protect the working girl" a solemn ditty.





starched shirtwaists that rubbed her neck raw and were forever parting company with the separate skirts; leather belts that kept riding up as their wearers bent over a desk; wide sleeves caught into tight cuffs that swiped dust off desk tops and got caught in the typewriter carriage; long, voluminous skirts that dusted a sidewalk neatly

enough but had a nasty trick of getting caught beneath chair legs. When the pendulum swung, it swung wide. The reaction brought the frivolous stenographer who regarded a job as a stop-gap between dancing evenings and an office as a good place to wear out old party gowas. Her conception of business garb was a decollete flowered chiffon and many jangling bracelets. Her coiffures were fearful and wonderful to behold and her cosmetics freely and publicly applied.

Then the World war ja red the whole structure of industry into different and sobering attitudes. It gave women their real chance in business, and they didn't muff it. The boys came back from France to find women in many a field they never dreamed of entering before that Lot at Serajevo. And there they have stayed.

Trey've learned about clothes from business. And they have passed it on to other women. Learned to wear conservative colors and to harmonize a season's wardrobe so that frocks don't clash with hats or coats and vice versa. To insist that those chic lingerie touches on a dark dress be detachable, so that they can be whisked through het suds and across an ironing board of an evening. To foreg. floor length skirts for office wear and wide, elaborate sleeves. To demand costumes that can serve all day at a desk and still be in the picture if worn to a restaurant for dinner when there isn't time to change.

Nevertheless and anyhow the business woman is feminine first and practical atterwards. She knows what suits her, but she aims to be in the mode at any cost. Strange quirks of psychology create fashions. and should some fancy dictate to women in general that bustles and crinolines are the smartest things ever next season, we business femmes would jolly well park our dictator's crown by the side of the road pick up our bouffant skirts, and climb aboard the band wagon.



Sunday, April 22, 1934