

# TODAY'S STYLE ARBITER IS THE BUSINESS GIRL

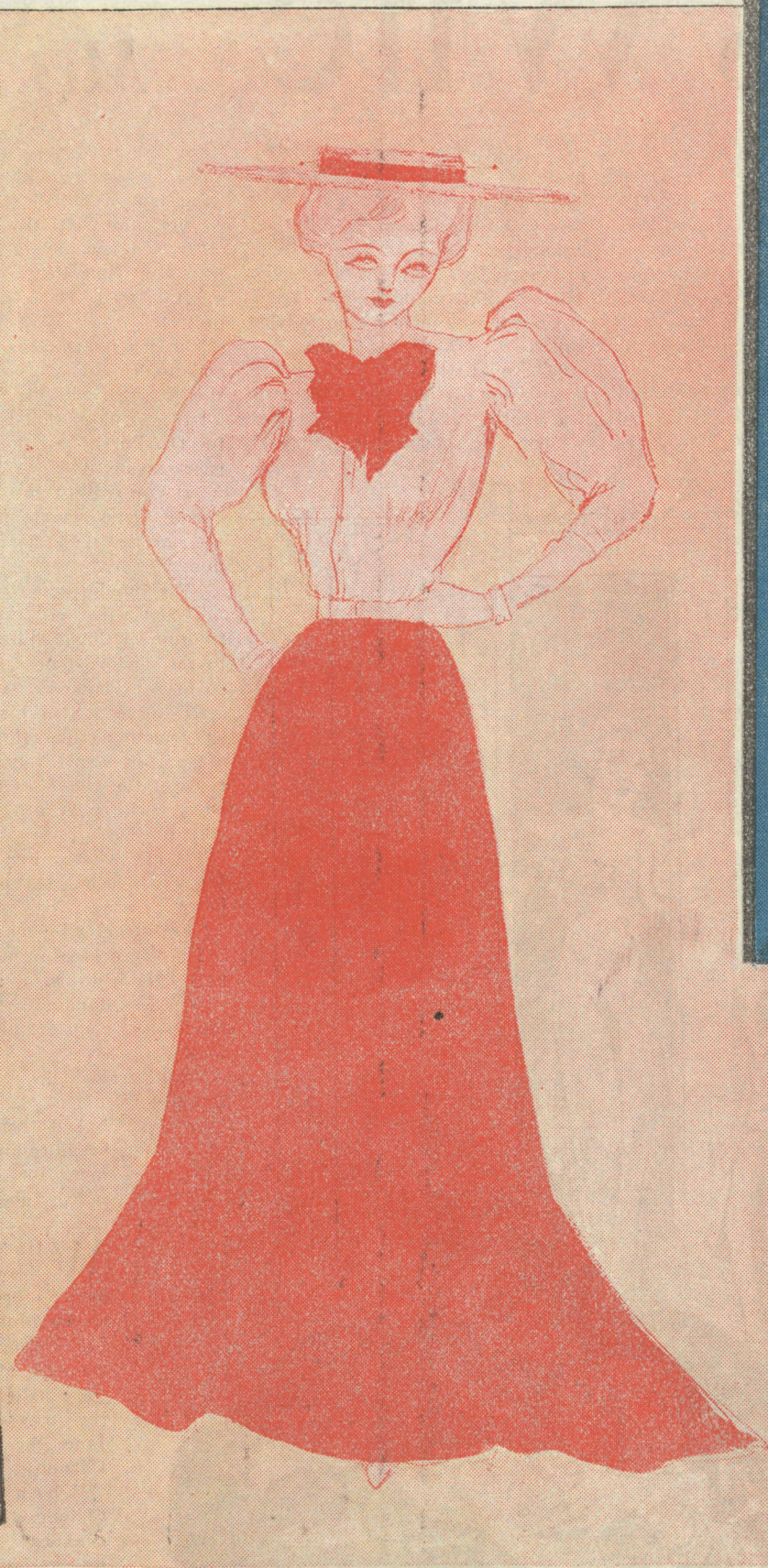
She Learns What to Wear  
and How to Wear It  
from Her Career

By Kathleen McLaughlin

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



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



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



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 Flordora sextet was smashing hearts right and left, and "Heaven will protect the working girl" a solemn ditty.



1905. The machine age exerted its initial influence on fashion in these swanky motoring rigs, shown with a "late" model.

by members 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 disposes.

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 women'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 set 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 plaid 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 them.

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 business 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



1915. Contemporary with the Castle waltz, just prior to the world war era—and still smart.

The streamlined Mrs. Frederic McLaughlin (Irene Castle) as mannequin in a style show a few months ago. Business woman by avocation, her superb carriage and slim figure keep her eminent among style leaders of the world.