

**AMERICAN COMMON SENSE**

**Mrs. Roosevelt Causes Astonishment Among the Fashionable Set.**

Nothing at the present moment is being discussed with such avidity as the fact that Mrs. Roosevelt, wife of the President of the United States, has declared that a woman of good judgment can be well garbed with the small expenditure of \$300 annually. The arguments for and against have waxed warm during the past fortnight.

Mrs. Roosevelt has been receiving her friends informally for the past two weeks every Friday afternoon. All the ladies in high official rank and the personal friends of the mistress of the White House have been bidden to pay their respects on these occasions. The guests have been received in the private drawing-room of the Executive Mansion, on the second floor, and, of course, there has been much general conversation. Naturally the subject of dress was introduced, and the ladies were delighted to learn the original and valuable ideas which Mrs. Roosevelt advanced. According to the "testimony of an eyewitness" the ball, on one of these occasions, began rolling by the remark of a wealthy Western woman, that she had just paid \$40 for a silk undershirt, and she thought it cheap for the quality and style she had obtained. Mrs. Roosevelt looked at her aghast—

"Why," she exclaimed, I would pay scarcely more than that for a silk gown. That is a fabulous price, extravagant beyond expression."

The lady began to apologize and to say that silk skirts were a luxury and therefore costly, but Mrs. Roosevelt interrupted.

"Of course, I know that nowadays every woman must have a variety of all luxuries—silk petticoats included. Now," she said meditatively, "a silk petticoat should not require more than twelve yards of material, and silk of excellent quality can be purchased for less than a dollar a yard. With lace, ribbon or 'footing' or any other popular trimming and the cost of making, an excellent petticoat can be obtained for less than twenty dollars—or half the cost of the one which my friend has spoken of. The plan I have followed wherever I have lived is to engage a conscientious modiste who will buy my goods and make my garments. I get better service and better material by this plan. During my early married life, and even later, my dressmaker has managed to make me presentable on \$300 a year.

This was the conversation which has wrought up the fashionable world of two continents. The Europeans shrug their shoulders and call this doctrine nonsense. The pretty young wife of the First Secretary of the French Embassy, Mme. de Margerie, a sister of the dramatist, Edmond de Rostand, and a Parisian of Parisians, said in a deprecating tone:

"It is impossible. One pays nearly that much for an opera cloak, a set of furs, a stylish tailor gown—and then for hats! That is always a sad rent in my income. Mrs. Roosevelt should see my milliner's bill."

Nevertheless, Mrs. Roosevelt's plan can be intelligently explained by her close friends, and they can prove that by a little thought and good taste, a woman can make a fashionable appearance on \$300 a year. One of the modistes who served Mrs. Roosevelt during the time that her husband was drawing a salary of \$3,500 a year as Civil Service Commissioner, says that she made a stylish appearance and that she spent less than \$300 a year for her clothes. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Roosevelt had any private income of any extent, and their little family came rapidly. The cares and expenses incidental to these conditions made serious havoc with the extra money. Mrs. Roosevelt frankly told her dressmaker what she could spend more on her clothes, and asked co-operation in making ends meet. According to this lady, the present mistress of the White House could calculate down to a penny the cost of a her raiment. She insisted on every being of the best quality, even the "finishings," hoods and eyes, bindings and belts. These finishings were often used for several garments, as a result of buying good material. Mrs. Roosevelt always cheerfully laid away buttons and ornaments, and many times she appeared in a gown most stylishly trimmed in ornaments which had served several other garments.

To quote a modiste who served the mistress of the White House for many years:

"Mrs. Roosevelt was the most sensible customer I ever had. She always knew exactly what she wanted and how much she would expend. She was also amiable and never found fault. She had her gowns remade, and she did not expect that a remodelled gown would look better than a new one. Many ladies who think they are economical expect that, and when they are disappointed they blame it on the dressmaker. Mrs.

Roosevelt bought only the best. She would pay \$80 or \$100 for a cloth street gown, but this would last her two seasons without being altered. She never selected an ultra color or a unique style. Her tastes were quiet, and while her garment was stylish and effective it was never conspicuous. After two winters, this gown would be remade and re-trimmed.

"Her full-dress costumes were always remade at least twice, yet so careful was she of them, and so excellent was the material of which they were made, that she could use them for skirts, or silk waists to wear under jackets or to make dressing gowns. She never bought the gauzy filmy stuffs which scarcely hold their own for a night. Heavy silk or satin, brocade of a novel color or design and the soft wools so much effected in France were her favorite selections.

"Now, as to the expenditure of \$300 per annum, if a woman follows Mrs. Roosevelt's plan, the accomplishment is easy. The year she bought a handsome street gown she did not purchase an evening toilet. By this arrangement she could get the extras and still have an ample variety.

"Mrs. Roosevelt is against all extravagance in hosiery, underwear and the trifles which are so costly. Everything she has is simple, of the best material and chosen with admirable taste. Her hats she frequently refitted herself, adding a bird here and a bow there and getting a stylish effect.

"Another thing which I have heard the mistress of the White House say, is that the care taken of clothes is the secret of their good appearance. She would change her street gown the moment she entered the house.

"As she never allowed herself the luxury of a maid until her husband succeeded to the presidency, she would always brush her gown before hanging in the closet. By this plan, her cloth frock never got out of shape, something which will surely happen, if one lolls around in the house before changing. I never knew a woman more scrupulously neat than Mrs. Roosevelt. She abhorred any negligence in dress and she was always busy sewing on buttons and repairing braids and other defects in a garment which was in much use.

"I remember a young friend asking her at my house, if she ever did any fancy work, embroidery or crocheting, and she laughingly replied that her time was all employed in darning stockings for her husband and the little ones and in keeping her own clothes in order. I had the contract for cleaning and repairing her gowns, and I always found them in perfect order, a gown in use more than two years would hardly have a spot on it. All this goes to show that it depends on the care you give your garments as to how long they will last."

Mrs. Roosevelt is partial to black and white, and she is rarely seen in colors. In her daily walks with her children, she wears a walking skirt of black broadcloth, which reaches her ankles, and a nobby jacket adorned with buck horn buttons. These buttons were made from

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a buck which the President shot in Montana, and, according to Mrs. Roosevelt, they have been in continuous use for ten years, on hers and the children's jackets. She has a dark brown cloth of the regulation demi-train and trimmed with beaver.

She will go to New York in a few days and will get four evening gowns and three handsome street costumes. For the first time in her life, this thrifty lady has purchased such a number of gowns. One thousand dollars is all that she proposes to expend—New York World.

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