

*Underwear from 3000_{BC} to
the 1970's*

sis.

e of Art and Design.

, Dublin.

m 3000BC-1970AD.

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UNDERWEAR FROM 3000BC - 1970AD

Introduction

Having studied the history of fashion I found it of increasing interest to research and study some of the unseen elements in the ever changing world of fashion. I examined the influence of social pressures, body protection, cleanliness, erotic use, class distinction, women's emancipation in sport and the revolution in the manufacture of man-made fibres - all of these factors which have an influence on underwear. I have also illustrated in line drawings the under-garments through the years.

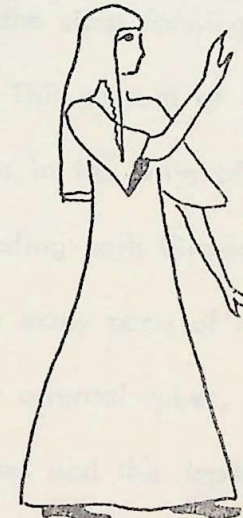
Christian Dior, king of couture in the years after the 1939-45 war said, "Without foundations there can be no fashion" he could have reversed the statement and also have said "Without fashion there can be no foundation". Fashion is a shape a-changing shape and that shape is mainly and sometimes wholly formed and controlled by what is worn underneath it by the corset and underwear. A lot of these underpinnings have a history of their own, they have at times started as outerwear. A lot of these underpinnings have a history of their own they have at times started as outerwear and gone underneath usually because of their becoming more functional. On other occasions underwear concealed or glimpsed at for long periods has emerged as outerwear but in general it has it's own story. Underwear existed in some form before fashion began, but it did not acquire any significance or any history until fashion had acquired it's foundation. Fashion as we know it is limited to the Western world and to the period from the later middle ages onwards. Mankind has for innumerable centuries been arranging painting carving sculpting telling stories dancing singing songs and making music - all ways of self-expression and projection of his feelings. While all their arts were developing over the centuries men and women continued to dress in very much the same way generation after generation in one civilisation after another. The history of clothing seems to have started once mankind had discovered how to spin and weave and to make fabrics that were wool, flax or cotton, according

to the part of the world concerned. In China from early days it was silk, whose process of manufacture, until a few centuries ago was a closely guarded secret by that country.

We can't really say what country had developed what first, or who discovered how to weave first, but once the lengths of fabric were there, people, men and women alike, draped them around their bodies in various ways and went on doing so.



STRAIGHT-FALLING EGYPTIAN TUNIC
STARTING BELOW WAIST,
WITH CROSSED SHOULDER BAND
AND KNOTTED SASH. ABOUT 1125 B.C.



T-SHAPED TUNIC FROM
EGYPT C 1500 B.C.

300 B.C. - 1350 A.D.

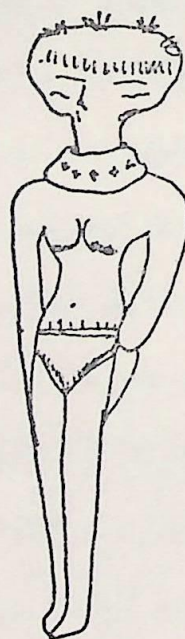
Egypt around 300 B.C., had a considerable degree of sophistication in draping. Sometimes they wore narrow tunics, starting below the chest, extending to the ankles and often supported by a cross wise shoulder

strap. Sometimes the drapery was drawn around the figures to the front.

Sometimes in Egypt there was more than one layer of clothing, one opaque and one transparent. In this case the top was transparent, but neither could be designated as being an undergarment as we understand the word. As a variation, the clothing material, instead of simply being draped was folded in two, vertically, with a hole or slit at the top for the head so that it became more like a tunic. Pieces were also cut out of it, down the sides forming a letter 'T' and creating wide or narrow sleeves. This pattern of dress was to be continued and repeated, with variations in the ways of folding and draping, through subsequent eras, including both Greek and Roman civilisations. It persists to this day in many parts of the world, notably in Indian saris, Arab and other oriental robes, and can also be seen in the context of Chinese dresses and the Japanese kimono. There was nothing of recognizable fashion in the modern sense. There was no basic distinction between what men and women wore or between underwear and outerwear.

However, from this era remain a few female terra cota figures and figurines of two types, separated from each other by only about a thousand years of history and hundreds of miles, but perhaps standing out as the starting point for underclothes, and in one type specifically women's underclothing.

One outstanding example of the first type of figures is a Babylonian girl of about 3000 B.C. from Sumeria, who wears what today would immediately be described as briefs. The other type comes from Crete and is attired in the first recorded corset and crinoline. Her place in history is about 2000 B.C. Both are uncornedly bare breasted, and dressed in what in their day was obviously outerwear.



SUMERIAN TERRA COTTA
FIGURE 3000 BC



CRETAN WOMAN
C. 2000 BC.



Cretan snake goddess
2000 BC.

The briefs were probably derived from the loin cloth, the most elementary of early and primitive garments for both sexes and one familiar in immense

scattered parts of the world from days as remote as those of cave drawings. Draw it up between the legs, it becomes crude briefs, as is shown by other figures in reliefs and vase drawings from many parts of the world. The Cretan figure on the other hand, is far more intriguing in that it shows a kind of dressing that is completely out of context with the traceable course of the history of clothes, nothing remotely resembling it had been recorded elsewhere. Archaeologists have discovered evidence of a highly developed culture. The corseted figures of these years was baffling considering that several hundreds of years later, the era began that was to culminate in classical Greek, men and women alike who were still wearing clothes formed of drapes and folded lengths - all seen in Greek sculpture, frescoes on vases that remain. They are shown with a detail and naturalness absent from the formalised and geometric lines of Egyptian art.

In classical Greece, as in Egypt, there were frequently two layers of clothing, worn similarly by men and women alike, but neither were considered as underwear, though they pin pointed it's origin. The chiton or tunic was knee-length or full length. It was either draped around the body and over one or both shoulders or else it was held on the shoulders by broaches or pins. Women often chose the latter effect and both men and women sometimes added a belt to hold it in at the waist. Sometimes there were also crossed bands that went over the shoulders and across the chest.



DORIC CHITON
 (5TH BC - 2ND AD.)

Over the chiton went, when needed for warmth, a himaton or cloak, similar in shape to the chiton and usually wrapped around the body, over the shoulders and sometimes also over the head. It varied in size. Sometimes it was the only garment worn by men, especially older men, who wore it draped round the waist and over the shorter cloak, often worn mainly by soldiers and horsemen. It was called a chlamys.

Female statues show no trace of anything been worn under the chiton, but there is literary evidence that the Greeks set a lead in the relatively small matter of women's underwear and figure control. A band of linen or kid was wound around the waist and lower torso to shape and control it, also mentioned are Greek works describing breast bands or girdle, referred to in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*.

A similar band, called the mastro-denton, or breast band, was also worn round the bust, apparently to flatten or minimize it and not, as in more recent history, to stress it's curves. No records really state to which



DORIC CHITON 5TH CENTURY
BC 2ND CENTURY AD.

extent these bands were worn by Greek women. The Greeks can probably be given credit for introducing, or at least influencing, the most significant items of female underclothing; the corset and brassiere. They were the people that were many centuries later to have more influence than any others on fashion when it came into existence.

Clothing in ancient Rome followed closely on the lines of that in Greece and elsewhere. In Rome too, women sometimes, wore bands of material round the hips and bust - a Roman mosaic in Sicily shows a female athlete wearing a bikini type of briefs and bra in the fourth century A.D.

Once there was an element of grandeur introduced in Rome i.e. clothes becoming important, as a sign of rank, women began wearing elaborate layers of clothing. Some of this may have been regarded as underwear. But it is impossible to be certain and with regard to the loosely draped clothing it would not likely have had a shape and character of it's own.

From these early times onwards, for many, centuries one is confronted with the difficulty that underwear could not be seen. Statues, etc. show the lavish details of the arrangements of the outerwear, but of the undergarments there is nothing to be seen. What can be said however, is that country after country, century after century, similarly draped lengths of material, continued to constitute clothing. Statuettes of women of the first century A.D. vary scarcely at all from those of the fifth B.C. However in the 4th century A.D. when the capital of the Roman Empire moved to Constantinople, the Eastern influence led to the first significant change in clothing, that was to influence the Western world. Trousers were worn, they were previously in the East regarded as mainly women's wear and unmanly. Over them went tunics of varying lengths and at times men wore trousers in a knee length style under their tunics or draped clothes. They were generally thought to have come from Persia and started a move towards trousers and other 2 legged garments worn as outerwear or underwear by both sexes.



BYZANTINE DRAPED CLOAK.
DRESS AND UNDER-DRESS
6th AD.



MEDIEVAL DRAPED ROBES.

In mosaics in Byzantine churches Europeans are shown wearing knee length tunics with long narrow sleeves, long loose cloaks and occasionally with accompanying 'Barbarian' trousers.

In northern Europe the Saxons and Celts wore these trousers and from the Bronze Age onwards loose tunics or draped lengths of material were also worn there, as over most of the world.

From all these centuries there was to emerge as the start of underwear, the man's shirt and woman's chemise, both derived from the tunic, and also what would much later, become respectively trousers. Pants and women's knickers all originating from the early trousers. As with subsequent articles of underwear, these all started as outer garments. The woman's long loose tunic style dress began about 1150 to be drawn close to the figure by means of lacing at the back, sides or front, so that it became tight fitting and waisted. There was as yet no cutting to form the waist and no separation of bodice and skirt, but the lacing created the first close fitting waistline in modern dress history. Buttons and other fastenings did not yet exist, so lacing was obvious way to achieve this.

Why this change from the long age of draping garments?, probably because the hold of the Church was weakening and the idea of Romantic love, 'The new look' was encouraging women to reveal their attractions. Whether this was the case or not, the emergence of the waist was the start of shaping and re-shaping the outward appearance of the human body, so as to make it express something of the feelings and attitudes of the individual.

It also provided the real beginning of the story of underwear, the prototype of the corset, the chief shape maker appears in a 12th century manuscript Cottonian collection. It is an illustration of a figure which has a human



'FIEND OF FASHION'
12TH CENTURY SHAPED, LACED BODICE
FROM COTTONIAN MS.

form but a grotesque bird-like head, outspread wings and webbed feet. It wears a tight fitting bodice extending from the shoulders to below the waist and closely laced up the front with a dangling lace falling below it almost to the ground. There is a strange tulip-shaped skirt, so long that it is knotted up with a big hoop to keep it from trailing off the ground. It was probably an outer garment and it was not until some centuries later that similar items of wear were to become undergarments.

By the 13th century, women were again wearing long, loose, shapeless dresses, pouched over a girdle at the waist, and with no figure definition at all. Again it is impossible to reason or speculate why this happened.

Shapes continued, they came and went, fashion was established. In this process of shaping, underclothes were to play a main part and passed through changes as many and as bewildering as would fashion itself. Without them outer fashion would not have been able to exist at all. Underwear would have its own fashion and sophistication.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD:

"She vowed then a vow to the Father in Heaven,
Her smock to unsew and a hair shirt to wear,
To enfeeble her flesh, that was so fierce to sin".

The function of medieval underwear was purely utilitarian. The superior classes wore linen, but it was not visible in any form so as to express class distinction and only very indirectly to enhance sexual attraction. This was when (braies - breeches, a masculine garment concealing the sexual region, the word breeches then became that of an outer garment and braies for the undergarment. During the second half of the 12th century when braies became definitely an undergarment, the seat was made very much fuller and the front opening discarded. The legs were shortened and the stockings made long and wide above, were pulled up over them and attached by chords in front to the braie girdle. A running string which emerged at intervals from

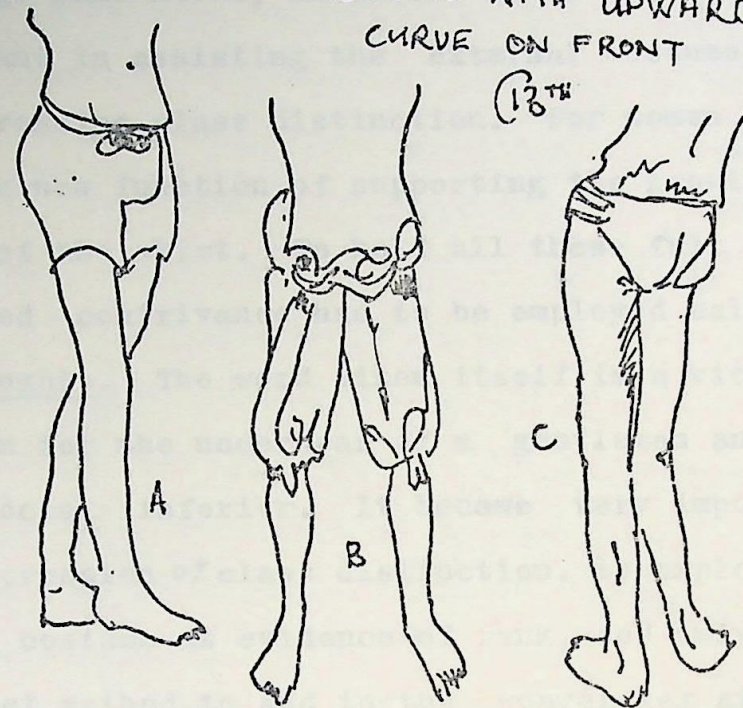
the hem at the waist for this purpose) became shorter and shorter and the shirt could no longer be tucked in but hung outside over the thighs after 1340 the costume on the surface some what resembling modern tights began to display the shape of the male legs as a form of sex attraction. As they became tighter so that some required a slit at the hem of each leg to move.

A type of female beauty in the middle ages represents forms clothed in broad flowing skirts and the characteristic shape of pregnancy. The peasant and labourer did not attempt to keep pace with the changes of fashion. They continued to wear the long braies of their forefathers.

With regards to morals in the medieval period, underclothes were often associated with the idea that the body was sinful, a source of evil, which needed constant discipline. If a woman committed adultery, she had to appear in her shift. Another penance was the wearing of a hair shirt. Often in battle, one was forced to surrender in their shirts only.

The medieval mind, never thought that underwear expresses the spirit of the changing times in sympathy with the outer clothing. The changes in the outer garment were however, frequent. As for cleanliness, the only hint I could find was that the considered social inferiors were content to wear coarse woollen materials. The shirt generally worn had kimona style sleeves, vents not always being at the sides but sometimes more forward.

BRAIES WITH UPWARD
CURVE ON FRONT



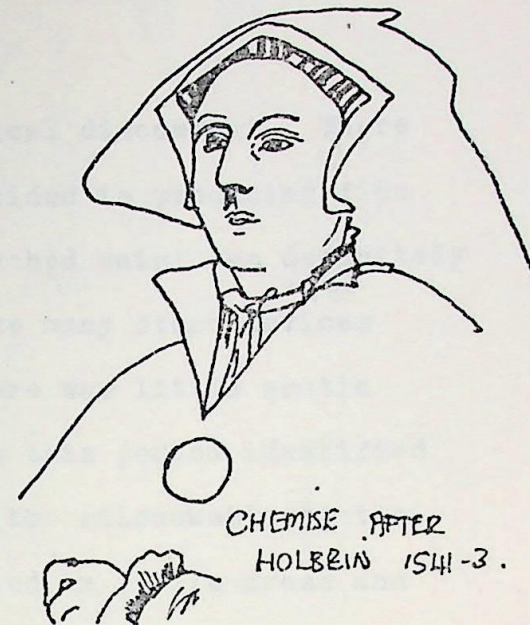
- (A) POUCHED BRAIES TIED WITH
A BOW. FIRST HALF (15th)
- (B) BRAIES TIED AT THE KNEE
- (C) SHORT BRAIE LATE (15th)

1485-1625

A change came about, underwear had a significance. It was important in assisting the external costume of both sexes in expressing class distinction. For women underclothing had the new function of supporting the growing size and shape of the skirt. To hold all these full petticoats a hooped contrivance had to be employed called the farthingale. The word linen itself is a victorian synonym for the underwear of a gentleman and cotton was it's social inferior. It became very important in the expression of class distinction, to exploit the grandeur of the costume as evidence of rank, and only by that indirect method to add to the wearer, sex attraction.. The slashing exposed the fine quality of what lay beneath, this brought the shirt on a lining, simulating it into prominence. The shirt edge was ruffled and soon this became a 'ruffle'. The waistcoat originally an undercoat was shown when the doublet was taken. The huge skirt, one of the woman's most conspicuous methods of expressing class distinction, as in the form of a sweeping train on a circular shape supported on the farthingale. The 16th century garment was no longer a drudge, but promoted to serve the general mode expressing what the whole costume announced. The hall mark of social superiority was to share in that



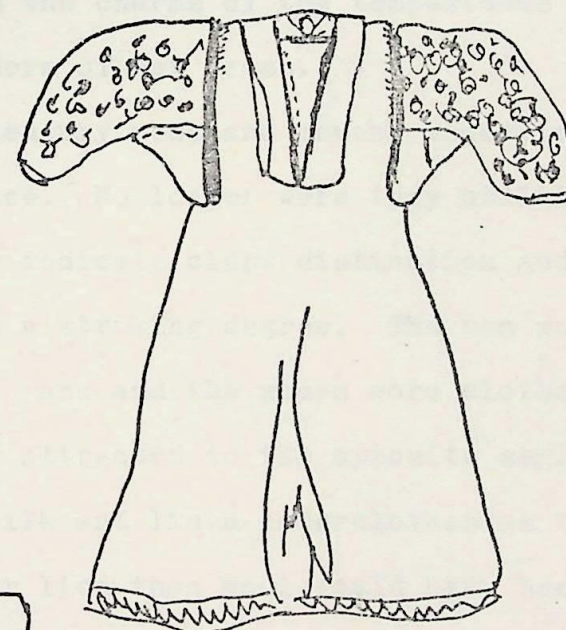
CHEMISE AFTER HOLBEIN 1543.



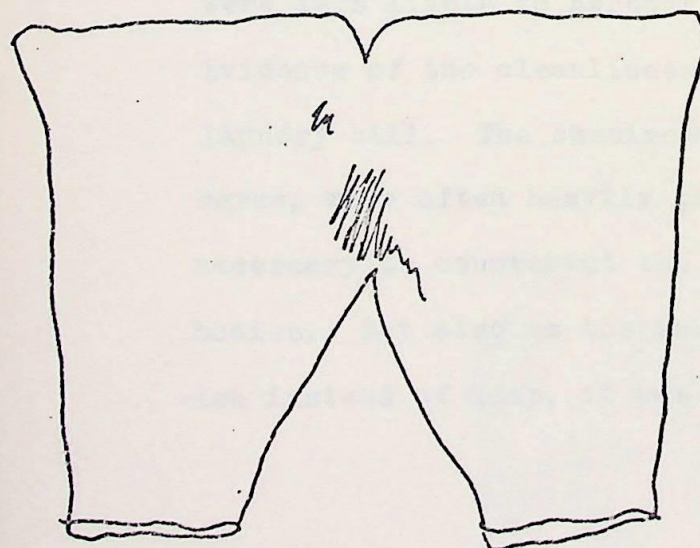
CHEMISE AFTER HOLBEIN 1541-3.



CHEMISE PLEMISH 1529.



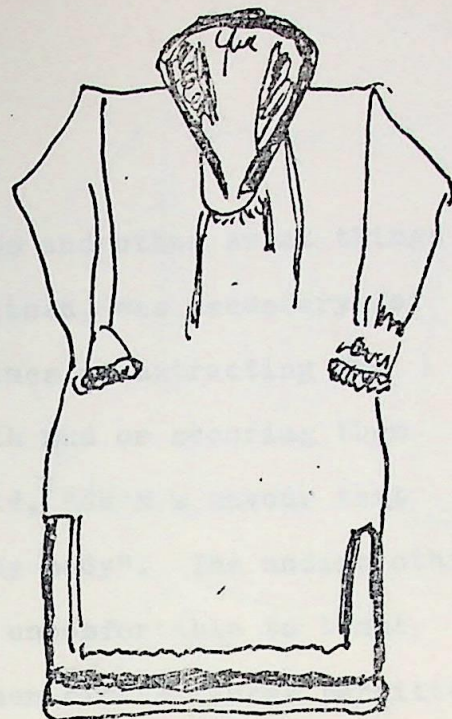
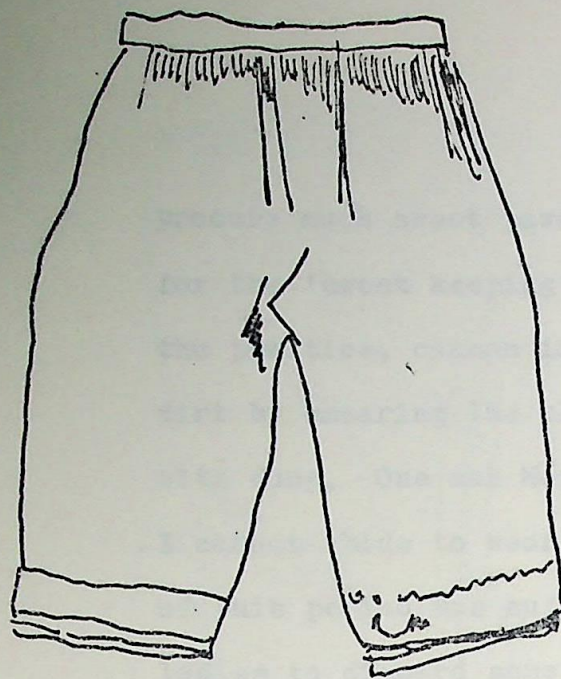
CAMICIA LATE (16th (ITALIAN))



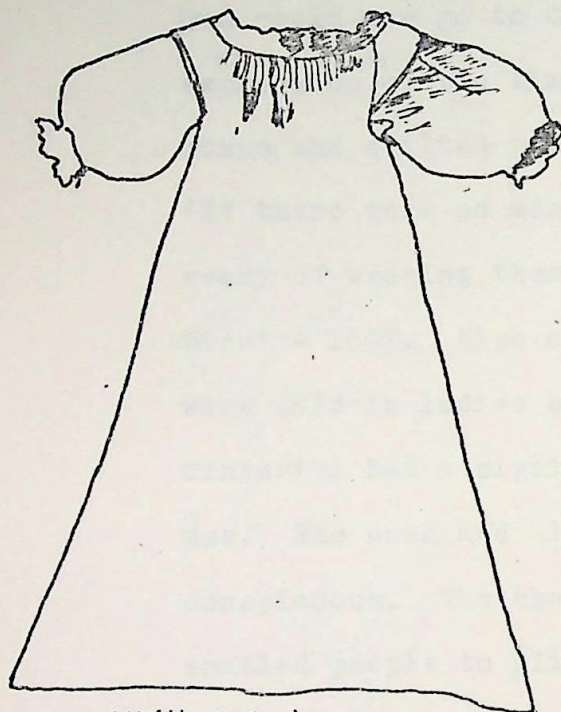
EMBROIDERED LINEN DRAWERS LATE (16th (ITALIAN))

extreme degree of finery and physical discomfort. There was the unmerciful corset, which aided in producing fine waists in men and women. This pinched waist was definitely the sign of social superiority like many other devices restraining physical freedom. There was little erotic use in this clothing as the man in this period identified himself very much with the female, the silhouette of the tiny waist being similar. Men acted in female dress and there was a general lack of erotic interest taken in the concealed garments of women. It was only the poets of a later generation that sang the charms of the tempestuous petticoat and sweet disorders of her dress.

During the 17th and 18th century mens and womens underclothes developed a new significance. No longer were they utilitarian but they were exploited to indicate class distinction and sexual attraction to quite a striking degree. The men wore garments to express social rank and the women wore clothes that would not be sexually attracted to the opposite sex. Both sexes began to wear silk and linen underclothes as these were less liable to harbour lice than wool would have been. Evidence of the cleanliness of this time comes from the laundry bill. The chemise and many other garments of both sexes, were often heavily perfumed. This was not only necessary to counteract the smell of our ancestors' unwashed bodies. But also as the washing was done in tubs with wood ash instead of soap, it was necessary for the laundress to



SHIRT LATE 16TH



LINEN CHEMISE 1700 - OR EARLIER



SHIRT AND CRAVAT.
CHARLES DUKE OF
(SHREWSBURY 1690).



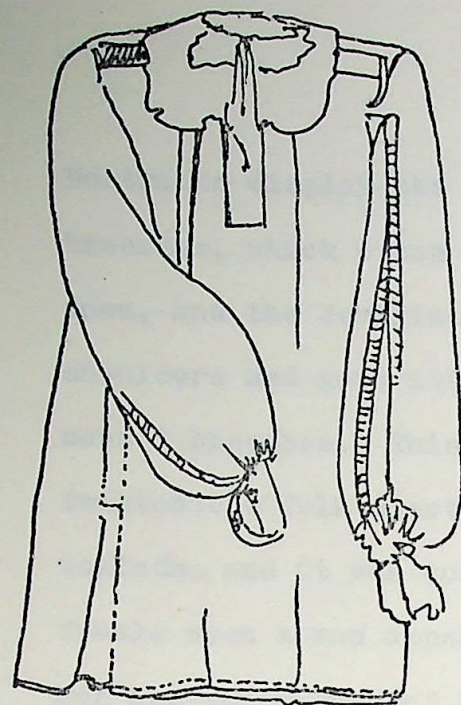
CHEMISE 1678-80 FROM LILLY'S PORTRAIT
OF ELIZABETH LADY ORENDEN.

Procure much sweet powder. Herbs and other sweet things for the 'sweet keeping' of the linen, was necessary for the practice, common in early times of extracting the dirt by smearing the clothes with mud or scouring them with dung, One man Morrison said, "Such a savour that I cannot abide to wear them on my body". The underclothing of this period was sufficiently uncomfortable to tempt ladies to discard some of it, when circumstances permitted. One could now go to Church without stays on, the common expression of the time was 'She had nothing on but her stays and quilted petticoat' and another woman admitted 'If there were no men, adieu fine petticoats, we should be weary of wearing them' - from Vanburghs 'The provok'd Wife' - 1697. Also a known fact is that 'False hips' were sold in ladies shops. Ladies underwear in these centuries had a significance when it came to their erotic use. The neck and sleeves of the ^{ladies} chemise were equally conspicuous. The change from the rigid to flowing shapes, enabled people to glimpse at the petticoat. It became the recognized symbol of feminine charm, and so a new weapon of attack.

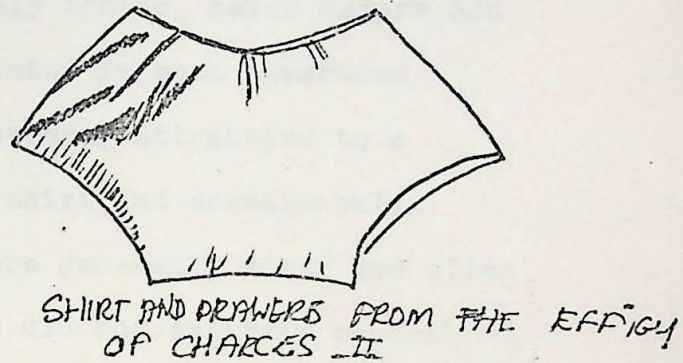
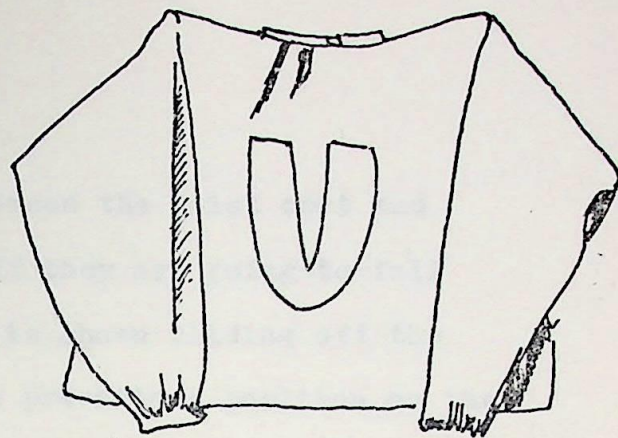
'A sweet disorder in the dress,
kindles in clothes a wantonness,

A winning wave
in the tempestuous petticoat,
do more bewitch me, than when art
is too precise in every part.

Written by poet Herrick.



SHIRT WORN BY JAMES DUKE OF
RICHMOND (1612-65)



SHIRT AND DRAWERS FROM THE EFFIGY
OF CHARLES II



From the bust of L.F. Roubiliac
by himself

Portraits display the shirt between the waist coat and breeches, which often look as if they are going to fall down, and the feminine chemise is shown sliding off the shoulders and gown itself in as precarious position as the mens ' breeches. This was obviously erotic, never before had fashionable folk elected to be painted in such hazardous toilettes, and it was considered extremely attractive to a female when a man appeared in his shirt and drawers only. Men and women even of high rank were generally dirty and often verminous. Exquisite lace ruffles did not entirely conceal grimy hands and black finger nails, and the fashion for heavily perfumed garments was more than often an excuse to distract from less agreeable odours. It was their experience that silk and linen garments next to the skin, were less liable to harbour lice than the wearing of woollens. This became usual for the undergarments until the era of physical cleanliness, a century later. Today, cleanliness is an essential part of sex attraction and the 17th century would have been repellent to us. Wool was disliked for the harbouring of lice and it was to be expected that the trade should collapse, so everyone by an Act of 1678 had to be buried in wool. The richer and more fashionable disobeyed this. When a woman committed adultery and was confessing in Church, she had to wear a sheet of 'Repentance' - From a shop bill, 'Five yards of calico for making a sheet to do penance - 5/-'

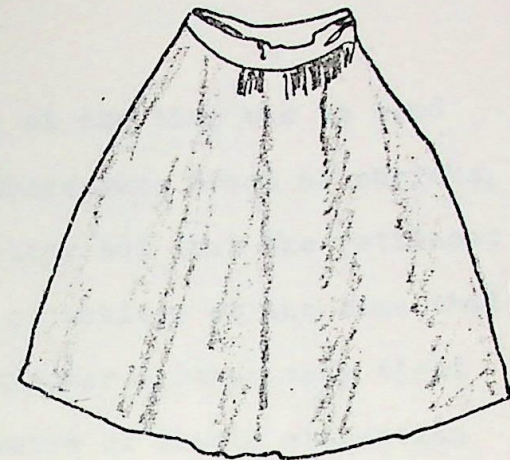
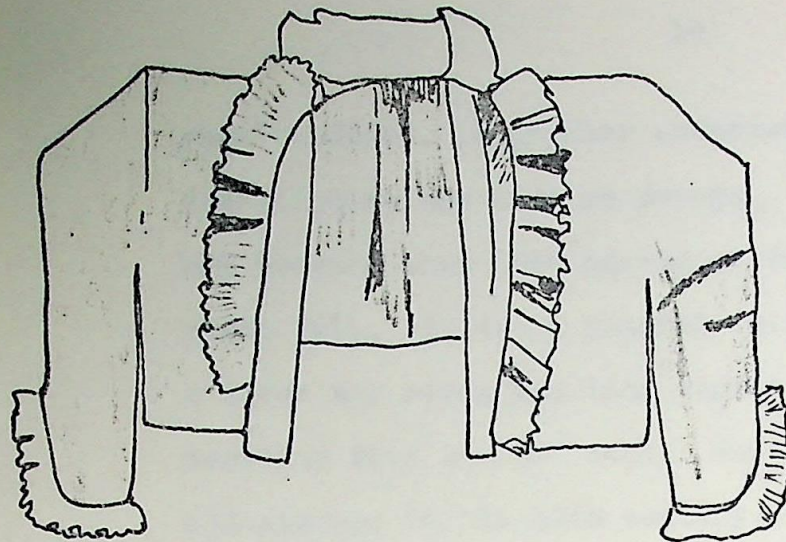
Vernley Memoirs 1639

'Another foolish affectation there is in young virgins, though grown big enough to be wiser, they are led blind fold by a custom to a fashion, pernicious beyond imagination who thinking a slender waist a great beauty, strive all they possibly can to straightlace themselves fine enough until they can span the waist by such deadly artifice, while they ignorantly, by strange compulsion shut up their waists in a whale bone prison, and open the door to consumption'.

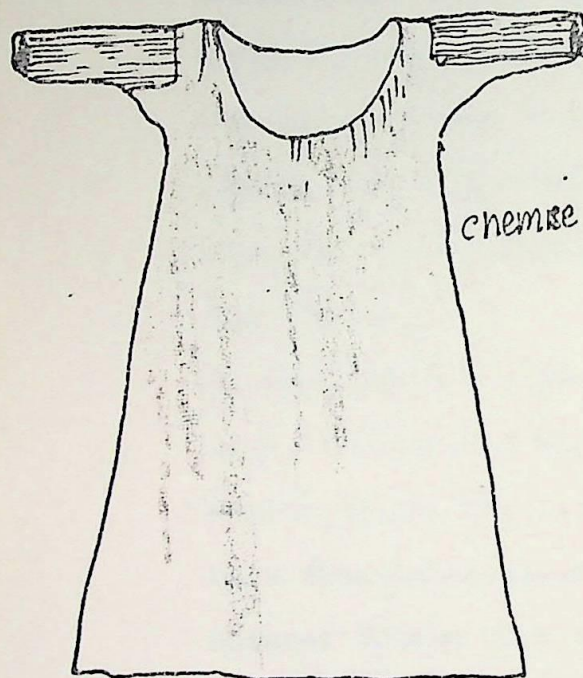
It was the custom at the time to have the dead wife painted in her night clothes with husband and children beside her bed. English women did not wear drawers until the 19th century, but exposures were usually unlikely. The farthingale of the 17th century was sufficiently substantial and the material nearest the skin was generally weighty enough to make exposures unlikely. However, in the 18th century this changed. The hoop of the skirts was different and the material was much flimsier. It was liable to be blown about or even turned inside out, the fashion then being to give it a side tilt exposing the under-petticoat. The 18th century hoop was folloed by the bustle - a device emphasizing the hips. The hoop of the 18th and the crinoline of the 19th being flexible possessed a peculiar erotic attraction in movement. The man's suit was designed to exhibit the shape of his legs in breeches and stockings leaving little opportunity for the display of garments beneath. Only the shirt front survived for display. A man called Henry Fielding observed 'How many fashions were forms of class distinction. Numberless are the devices made use of by the people of fashion

of both sexes to avoid the pursuit of the vulgar'. This idea was pushed and the hoop grew larger until the enemy was forced to give up the pursuit because the garments bordered on the ridiculous. It was impossible to convey 7 yards of hoop into a hackney coach or to slide with it behind a counter. Also both sexes found their fashions almost intolerable in very hot weather. In their own chambers and during summer months at informal gatherings, there was some form of relaxation. Gentlemen would wear night caps, slippers and night gowns, under which they wore no breeches. The ladies would wear stays, and smock, and a single lute string petticoat. There was not a hat or hoop to be seen. The male under clothing preserved in the shirt, it's former qualities, though somewhat diminished. The habit of leaving much of the waist coat unbuttoned to display the full quality of the shirt was more than evidence of social rank. It also had an attraction to the other sex, "A sincere heart has not made half some many conquests as an open waistcoat".

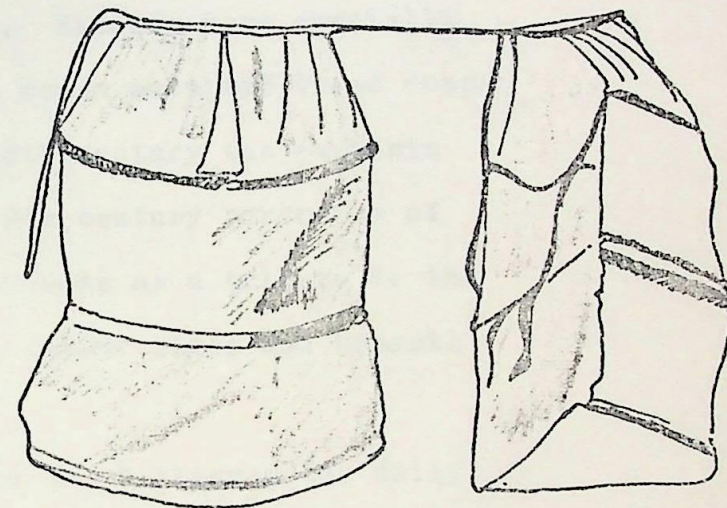
The erotic use of underwear in this period was quite predominant! and because there were no drawers being worn, and the materials were so much flimsier, accidental exposures were often embarrassing, perhaps not so! as the woman had a much more athletic approach to her walk, which before was rather solemn. Now they ran with a frish and a jump, and threw their enormous hoops almost in the face of those who passed. Some women writers at the time were discusted with the fashion of the hoop, others complained of it's inconvenience while recognising it's erotic



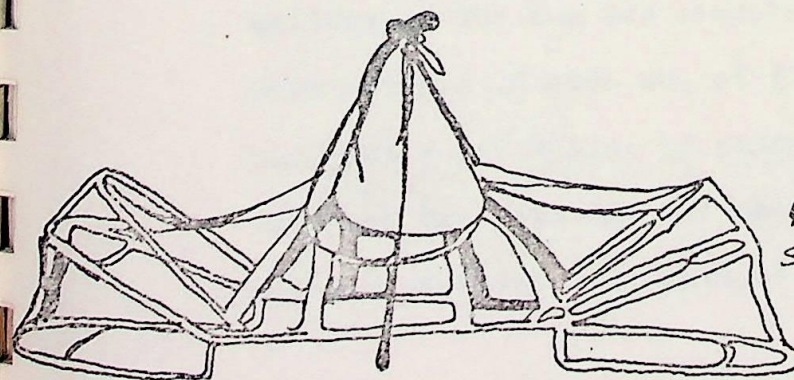
Woman's underskirt 1770.



chemise after 1740



BLUE LINEN PANNIERS 1740



hooped petticoat support in bent wood 1750.

CORSET, CHEMISE, AND UNDERSKIRT. FRENCH 1780



possibilities. A popular amusement at the time was to send young ladies sky high on swings. There were loads of shrieks, not because they were afraid of falling but that the petticoat might fall. It was a general rule of society at the time that a lover who swung his lady should tie her clothes very tight together with his hat band. The centre of erotic attraction had changed in the 17th century, the breasts were either completely exposed or very nearly so. Breasts were specially admired and freely spoken of and women accepted these compliments with approval. In the 18th century the emphasis changed to legs. A lot of the 17th century portraits of ladies were repainted over the breasts as a tribute to the 'new look'. In conversation legs became limbs and breasts the figure.

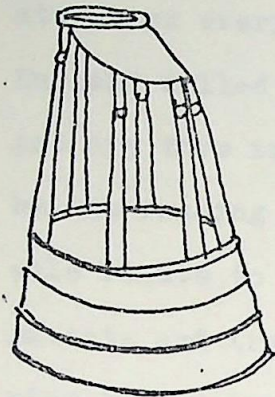
In the 1880's a movement occurred which changed the daily lives of women of all classes. This was the application of health principles to clothing and especially to underclothing. This fanaticism spread over quite a lot of Europe. Wool and natural fibres worn next to the skin was one of the rules of life for a large number of years. This was changed after the development of man made fibres after the 2nd world war. This cult had an immense effect on underwear of men, women and children. The man had accepted for years a cotton chemise or shirt with a limited use of flannel. A doctor Gustav Jaeger M.D. did a collection of essays on health culture. He testified that he cured his own chronic ill-health by the wearing of woollen clothing. He claimed wool worn next to the skin ensured



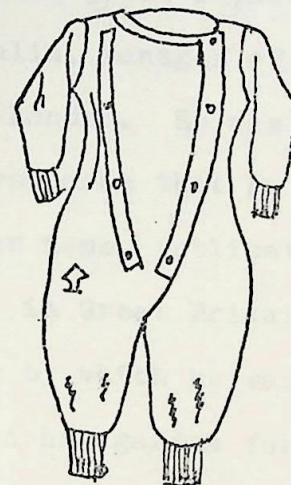
Cotton, bodice, tied at back: 1830.



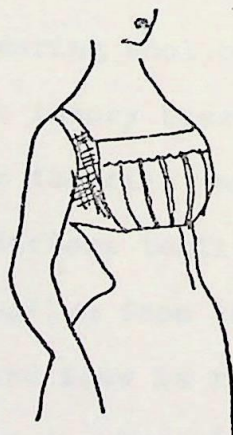
Cotton open drawers tucked and trimmed with lace 1825-1830



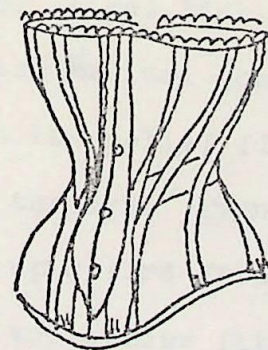
RED FLANNEL CRINOLINE 1869 WITH FLAT FRONT.



DR. JAEGER'S SANITARY WORKING STOCKINETTE COMBINATIONS IN PURE ANIMAL WOOL WITH DOUBLE THICKNESS OVER CHEST AND STOMACH. 1886.



BUST BODICE, BONED AND TAPED TO GIVE ROUNDED EFFECT. 1890.



DR. JAEGER WOOL CORSET WITH SPOON BUSK. 1886.

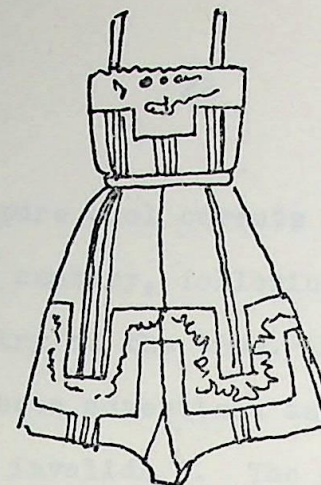
warmth and ventilation and induced a sense of vigour - all necessary for sound health. But not only next to the body, but also every bit of clothing, pockets, linings, handkerchiefs, hats and boots had to be of wool or to have wool inserted in them. The subject of health attracted attention everywhere. It had a great impact on a man in England called Mr. L.S. Tomalin, Manager of a whole sale grocery firm in the city of London. He was so impressed by the reading of Dr. Jaegers' books that he secured the sole rights to use the Jaeger name, publications, system patents and trade marks etc. in Great Britain, with a view to developing the ideas by which he was so impressed. Once he had a huge bonfire in his garden for all the non-woollen clothing in his house. In 1884 Mr. Tomalin started manufacturing Jaeger clothing, 100% wool and by the Autumn of that year won a gold medal at the international health exhibition in London. He also increased on Jaeger's idea of wearing wool by saying "All animal fibres only". This was a theory based on the observations of animal life. All these theories were praised by the British Medical Journal and doctors testified by the hundreds to the relief from rheumatism from this new sanitary break through. Even George Bernard Shaw is recorded to have walked up Oxford Street in a Jaeger garment! The clothing was all wool, close fitting made in natural coloured mixed white and brown wools, undyed and unbleached. The original Jaeger under garments were in 100% wool in a stock^xenette weave approved by the Doctor on

health grounds. They had long sleeves, high necked and were double fronted for protection. These were the combinations for men, women and children in summer and winter. Dr. Jaeger declared war on finery, silk dresses, white petticoats, linen stays, cotton or silk stockings, and white starched dresses. If they were to be worn they were to be made of pure animal wool. They should be worn with a dress of pure woollen stuff, closing well down the throat and having a double lining from the chest downwards. This was to be the winter and summer wear of women.

The corset was being condemned on the grounds of ill-health. The corset, now woollen, appeared and continued for many years. People realized also that it was being worn dangerously tight and that this tightness induced a feeling of want of support and a tendency to unshapely increase of bulk, only to be restrained by the use of force under which the internal organs suffered.. The people who grew up wearing the sanitary woollen corset had the advantages of girdled loins without disadvantages. In 1884 the sanitary woollen spring corsets were described as flexible, elastic, durable, with watch spring steels and as responding to every movement of the body. The steels were buttoned in at the upper end so that they could be removed for cleaning. The corsets were made in undyed sheep's wool also in white and grey camel hair. In 1887 a patented stocking suspender - a belt with suspenders was one of the earliest examples of this device to get rid of the constricting garter. Again the underwear world fashion



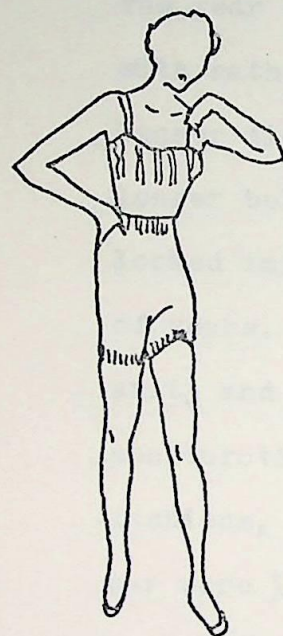
1914 BRASSIÈRE.



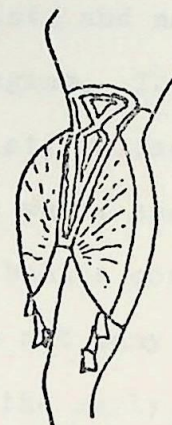
CLOSED CAMI-KNICKERS IN CREAM SILK WITH FINE PLEATING AND WIDE BANDS OF LACE. 1920



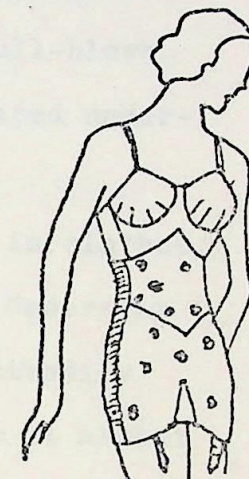
FLAT LOCK LACE BRASSIÈRE WITH BACK FASTENING. 1925.



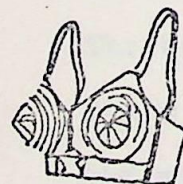
JAEGER VEST AND PANTIE IN PURE WOOL 1936



SATIN GIRDLE WITH SIDE SECTIONS OF ELASTIC 1947.



BACKLESS CORSELETE IN FIGURED BATISTE WITH SWAMI BRASSIÈRE TOP 1935.

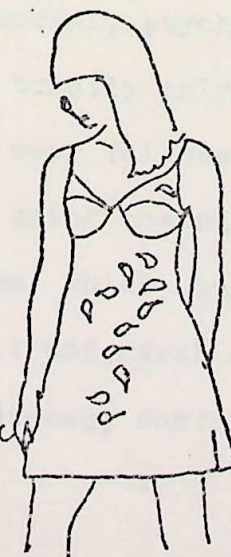


NYLON 'SWEATER GIRL' BRA WITH WIDE POINTED CIRCLE-STITCHED CUPS 1957.

WAIST PETTICOAT IN HAND-PAINTED PAPER NYLON WITH TWO NET UNDER SKIRTS 1960



BRA SLIP WITH FIBRE-FULL CUPS AND ELASTIC INSET AT BACK. 1968-71



changed. The pure wool corsets remained until the second decade of this century, following the longer hipped lines of other corsetry of the time. By the 1930's Jaeger's garments were been advertised as "Specially recommended for nurses and invalids ". The days of the full-blown beauty in her flowing skirts and strangley shaped underwear were over.

The year 1907 saw a close fitting Empire line in clothes, with rather high waists and narrower skirts. Underwear became fine and clinging. The corset became steadily longer below the waist, in fact it was so deep it almost looked impossible to wear, and this persisted for a number of years. The bust bodice continued to increase in popularity and there were not many outstanding changes in it's consturction during the early part of this centruy. The fashions, both outer and under of the latter years of the war were largely a continuation of the rather fussy and much trimmed pre-war trends, with skirts still near the ankles. Fashion came to a standstill during the 1st and also during the 2nd World Wars.

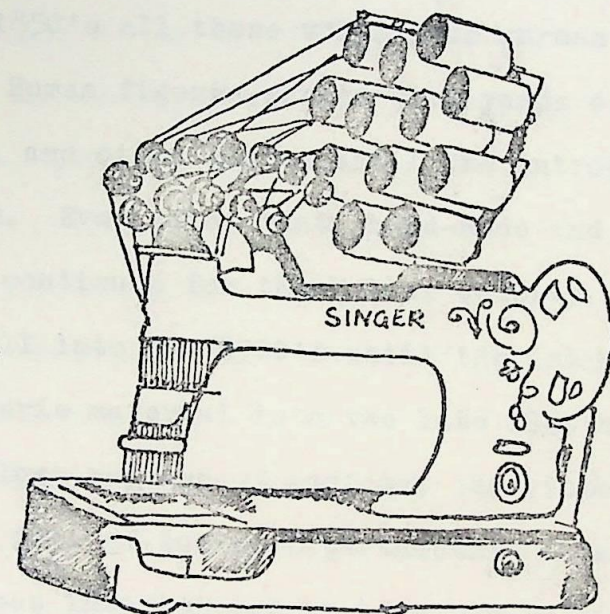
The history of underwear during the past forty or fifty years reflects increasingly the social, psychological and economic effects of what can briefly only be described by the word emancipation. Outer wear followed with increasing vigour and enterprize, the trend being towards freedom in the design and construction of clothes! which had begun after the 1st World War. It also meant that underwear followed suit, and that in practical terms, lightness, comfort and ease

were sought in it. Outer clothes became less formal, less fussy and much ^{more} uniform. Class distinctions were breaking down. Formality and ostentation were diminishing. The leisurely wealthy ^hwomen no longer dominated fashion in a world where independent working women were on the increase all the time. Spending power was also being spread over all the good things concerned with day to-day living as well as in the philosophy and policy of existence. Everyone was making for the open air. Sun bathing became popular and cover up fashion died. Tennis stars wore knee length or above knee divided skirts by the late 1920's. Within a decade shorts were worn for cycling and sport and short skirts were accepted for skating.

These social changes show themselves in simpler underwear and in the formulation of basics, which were mostly established in the 20's and have altered little in their general character during the years since then. They were and still are worn in very similar forms by people of all classes everywhere.

Viewing from the opening of the 1970's the distortions and discomforts of female underwear of the past seems almost night marish. Even though the outer garments may appear very beautiful there must have been some agonizing times in the years of the panniers, crinolines and bustles.

Until knitted woollen and woven cellular under clothing was introduced in the 1880's not a single under-garment conformed to the natural female shape or even tried to. Until the 1920's



A SEWING MACHINE OF THE LATE NINETIES USED ESPECIALLY FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF CORSETS AND OTHER WOMEN'S WEAR. IT WAS FITTED WITH FROM THREE TO TWELVE NEEDLES, AND COULD CARRY OUT PARALLEL ROWS OF FINE LOCK-STITCHING.

most underwear was still quite voluminous, usuall about three times the size of the wearer. Why was this - that such uncomfortable layers of everything should be worn?. There are probably psychological and sociological reasons for the oddity in various eras - there are also more practical considerations. Through most of the 500 years up to the mid 1850's all these voluminous garments were sewn by hand. Human figures worked with yards of fabric, minute hemming, and other sewing until the introduction of sewing machines. Even after that, hand-made and not home made underwear continued for the better quality market. This went on well into the 1920's until the introduction of nylon as a lingerie material into the late 1940's. In the middle class section of society, the victorian trend was to kill the idea of business partnership in marriage and to segregate women into leisure or idleness but in the case of the working classes of the 19th and 20th century the state of affairs as regards women workers was very different. Vast numbers of women needed work in order to live and with the great expansion of mechanical inventions in weaving a huge demand arose for factory labour in the booming textile trade. By 1884 there were 200 and 42,000 women and girls working in the cotton mills in Britain, under appalling conditions, with children, who were very young. The 1840 census showed that in the dress making and millenery trades more than 100,000 women were employed in worst conditions than factory workers.

However, the more elegant and intimate items of underwear, such as elaborate petticoat of the time, would be made by these skilled girls. It was usually the very fashionable ladies who kept up the demand that kept these girls working so hard.

Relief from the agony of endless hand-stitching did, however, come in the shape of the sewing machine. Like most mechanical inventions it was resisted by the workers concerned. It could se more quickly so they thought it might put them out of work. The first use of the sewing machine in Britain was for corsetry, and as a remover of drudgery. It's effect on underwear has been particularly strong and altogether for the good.

As man made fibres emerged an increasing proportion of underwear began to be made from them by large organisations and to be sold under nationally well-known brands. Marks and Spencers in England achieved total sales of £250, 000,000 in 1969. Their progress in underwear corresponds closely to the development of the new fabrics. They first entered the field in 1929 when they launched lock-knit rayon or artifical silk knickers - knee length with elastic at waist and legs. Rayon was the only synthetic material usued by them until 1947. This was the year when nylon began to be more freely available for civilian use. Soon a fancy mesh warp-knitted nylon was introduced and this became the real basis of a lot of the output of nylon underwear.

For some time rayon and nylon sold side by side, but rayon gradually gave way to newer synthetics and by 1957 nylon was the principal lingerie fabric. So the invention of new fabrics

went on and still is today. Underwear has a present functional character and mass production is responsible for a major part of it. Underwear seems to be soundly based on the needs of the human body and whether plain or fancy it is always expected to be light weight, free from bulk and comfortable. However, there is a trend today to revert back to natural fibres as once again man finds a sudden interest in his health, and I think a strong swing back to femininity, and inevitably increasingly attractive underwear is being produced at the same time. While women are discarding bras, Billions of pounds are spent on clothing all over the world each year of which nearly one tenth goes on foundations and underwear.

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