

IS "THE OLD-FASHIONED GIRL," with all that she stands for in sweetness, modesty, and innocence, in danger of becoming extinct? Or was she really no better nor worse than the "up-to-date" girl—who, in turn, will become "the old-fashioned girl" to a later generation? Is it even possible, as a small but impressive minority would have us believe, that the girl of to-day has certain new virtues of "frankness, sincerity, seriousness of purpose," lives on "a higher level of morality," and is on the whole "more clean-minded and clean-lived" than her predecessors?

From Pope Benedict's pronouncement against "the present immodesty and extravagance in women's dress," to the widely copied protests of a Brown University student-editor against girls who wear too few clothes and require too much "petting," the press of the world in general, and of America in particular, is having much to say about "the present relaxation of morals and manners among young men and women." College presidents, famous divines, prominent novelists, and grave professors of sociology have joined the controversy. Thus, Franklin H. Giddings, author and Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, emits a counterblast to the many indictments of present conditions in the perhaps extreme pronouncement that "whether girls wear their skirts long or short makes as much difference as whether a man parts his hair in the middle or on the side." He concludes that "our moral tone is no lower than it was in the days of our mothers or our grandmothers, or even in the days of our great-grandmothers." The Professor does not question, however, the generally expressed opinion that the young people of to-day live in a more "free-and-easy" social atmosphere than surrounded their mothers. "We can't have anything without having too much of it," said William James, and Alexander Black, the novelist, quotes his philosophy in admitting that, in specific times and places, we may be having "too much" of this relaxation. The point of greatest disagreement comes up with the question of morality in general. "Do modern modes in dressing, dancing, and social intercourse," as an Eastern college paper phrases the question, "really mean that the present generation is less moral than the preceding one?" The answers, as given by college and school authorities, religious editors, the editors of student magazines, and the general press seem

IS THE YOUNGER GENERATION IN PERIL?

THE LITERARY
DIGEST
May 14, 1921



WILL THIS SUMMER'S DRESSES BE EVEN MORE DEMURE THAN THE "MORAL GOWN"?

The picture in the center shows the "moral gown" designed by Philadelphia clergymen representing fifteen denominations. The groups on either side are advance summer models reproduced from *Saison Parisienne*, a semiannual Paris fashion journal published simultaneously in Paris, London, Vienna, Brussels, and New York.

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French Center Part Bob



Shingle, or Ina Claire Bob



Horizontal Tapered Bob



Flapper Bob

to be fairly evenly divided between attack and defense. It has been called the most two-sided question of the hour.

In the midst of the discussion, pro and con, a good deal is being done to check the tendency toward laxity among boys and girls of high-school age, where, in the belief of many observers, the greatest danger, or the only real danger, lies. We are reminded that supervision is always necessary here, and even so convinced a champion of modern ideas in manners and morals as the *New York Morning Telegraph* is stirred to protests by a report from Chicago that co-educational institutions in Illinois will not be responsible for the moral conduct of their girls. *The Telegraph* objects:

"Girls, when away from home, should not be thrown upon their own resources at an age when their judgment is unripe and their ability to steer their own course at best undeveloped. We are further informed that hereafter college dances will be unchaperoned and that self-reliance will be preached instead. This may make it easy on the deans of women, but it also may result disastrously in particular

cases. Parents will hesitate before committing their daughters to institutions which, in striving to be up to date, have overlooked one of the most obvious truths in nature."



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"PROPER AND IMPROPER."

This picture, under the title "Proper and Improper Way to Dress," has been widely circulated by the Y. W. C. A. in its educational campaign against certain modern tendencies.

OldMagazineArticles.com

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Aside from the usual protective measures, however, a number of organizations are unusually active on the ground that there is an unusual amount of immodest dressing and conduct. The Y. W. C. A. is conducting a national campaign among high-school girls. The following questionnaire is being sent to the members of the High-School Girl Reserves throughout the country:

“Have you kept the recommendation concerning the simple form of dress?

“What do you consider violations of a sensible hair-dress?

“How prevalent are georgette waists in your school?

“What do you consider the standard regarding cosmetics for high-school girls, in school and outside of school?

“What do you consider an ideal wardrobe for a high-school girl?

“Is there much powdering in public by high-school girls?

“What do you consider a standard for conduct on the street for Girl Reserves?

“What do you think is the proper evening dress for high-school girls?

“Do you think that the use of perfume is appropriate for a high-school girl?

“Do you approve of socks for girls in high school?”

The Y. W. C. A. is also, through its press department, supplying newspapers with material which appears under such suggestive head-lines as “Working Girls Responsive to Modesty Appeal”; “High Heels Losing Ground Even in France”; and “It Isn’t What the Girl Does; It’s Just the Way She Does It.” Photographs, pointing morals in dress and conduct, are also supplied. In the descriptive matter accompanying one of these, printed in the New York *Evening World*, THE DIGEST receives the following more or less complimentary notice:

“The girl on the right is really reading. She is demure and reserved, strictly minding her own business. Please note THE LITERARY DIGEST, enough to frighten any man away!”

In another case, we are informed by a member of the faculty of Leland Stanford University, THE DIGEST played a part in establishing modern standards of conduct. He writes:

“Dr. D. S., of ——— University, was sending his daughter across the country to attend Stanford University, which is his Alma Mater, and had very carefully instructed her not to take up with any strange people, particularly men, on her journey. The first letter received from the young lady spoke in glowing terms of a man she had met on the train. When her father upbraided her for disregarding his injunction in the matter of taking up with strange men and wanted her to explain why she did it, she replied, ‘Why, daddy, I saw him reading THE LITERARY DIGEST, and I knew he was all right.’ The explanation was accepted as valid.”

Returning to more serious phases of the question, the Woman’s Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church has entered upon a nationwide campaign, reports the New York *Times*, and it has “definite progress to report.” It is conducting a series of meetings for girls throughout the country, to discuss the problem of “upholding standards.” The Catholic Archbishop of the Ohio diocese has issued a warning against the “toddle” and “shimmy” and also against “bare female shoulders.” A bill which has passed both the New York Assembly and Senate gives the Commissioner of Licenses in New York the right to act as a censor of dances. In a number of State legislatures, bills have been introduced aiming at regulation of women’s dress, reports the New York *American*:

“In Utah a statute providing fine and imprisonment for those who wear on the streets skirts higher than three inches above the ankle is pending. The Philadelphia ‘moral gown,’ with its seven and a half inches of ‘see level,’ as one visitor called it, would cease to be moral in Utah if this law goes through.

“A bill is before the Virginia legislature which would raise the *décolletage*—front and back. It provides that no woman shall be permitted to wear a shirt-waist or evening gown displaying more than three inches of



Boyish Bob

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New Jersey, South Carolina, Kansas, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and a full dozen other States.

"From the three bills actually cited it would seem that, were these to become laws, the dress with its four-inch-high skirt which would be moral in Virginia would be immodest in Utah, while both the Utah and Virginia skirts would be wicked enough in Ohio to make their wearers subject to fine or imprisonment. Undoubtedly, other State laws would add to this confusion, and therefore a standardization acceptable to all is something that might ultimately be welcomed by women."

In Philadelphia a Dress-Reform Committee of prominent citizens decided to attack the problem in a businesslike way, and settle from the mouths of the critics themselves, once and for all, just what is immodest dress. A questionnaire was sent to 1,160 clergymen of all denominations in and near Philadelphia. Replies were received from them all, but examination, we are told, revealed that the clergy "were absolutely at odds themselves. There was far from a unanimous verdict even on the preliminary query as to whether the modern extreme styles are harmful to the morals of the wearers and to masculine observers." The Dress Committee adopted the device of striking an average of the answers and building a dress upon these averages, after submitting specifications and sketches to the clergymen. The design, reproduced on the next page, was accepted by the majority, "altho there still remained two fairly strong minority parties, one of which thought the dress was not yet conservative enough, while the other thought it was too conservative."

Denunciation and defense center more specially, however, about modern dances and the conditions that surround the associations of boys and girls at these affairs. Conditions are "appalling," declares one critic who may be expected to speak with authority, a dean of women in a Midwestern college. "There is nothing wrong with the girl of to-day," insists another dean of women, also stationed at a Midwestern college, and speaking on the basis of a wide acquaintance with practically the same set of conditions. It is the perennial case of the "youngsters *versus* the oldsters," a Princeton College wit remarks, but the line-up of opinion somewhat disarranges his idea, for many "oldsters" are found championing the new and freer ways of the present generation, while numerous uncompromising enemies of the modern dance, abbreviated clothes, and "relaxed morals and manners" are to be found among those whose years classify them with the youngsters. THE DIGEST, by way of gathering national sentiment on the whole question, lately addrest a circular letter to the religious editors of the country, to the presidents of colleges and universities, and to the editors of college papers, asking for their opinions upon the charges of "lax standards" which have been freely made throughout the country, and for remedial suggestions, in case conditions seemed to demand remedies.



Dutch Cut

These replies have been correlated with material on the same subject collected from newspapers and magazines in THE DIGEST office.

The comment, as received from religious editors, editors of student papers, and college deans and presidents, shows a surprisingly even division of opinion between those who believe that conditions are unusually bad and those who believe that they are not. The editors of college papers, themselves distinctly to be classed with the youngsters, show a larger proportion of "moral alarmists," as one of their number calls the reformist element, than do the presidents and deans of colleges. In round numbers, 55 college-student editors believe that conditions are unusually bad as against 38 who believe that they are not. Of the college presidents and deans, the proportion stands 52 against 43. The religious press, as might have been expected, shows a larger ratio of condemnation. Fifty-three religious editors believe we are having something like an immorality wave, as against six who believe that we are not. Fifteen of the replies in this category are difficult to classify, unless the writers be placed with

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By Graham Simmons, in the London *Bestander*.

HOW THE FOX-TROT IS DANCED IN LONDON.

Mr. Simmons states that these various styles of the fox-trot "may be taken as more or less official."

the defenders of modernity on the ground that they do not consider present conditions worse than usual. Allowance must be made in these replies for a considerable number of editors of denominations which oppose dancing in any form. In forty-two of the colleges whose presidents replied, dancing is prohibited. Of the total number of replies received, counting out those religious editors who condemn dancing *per se*, without expressing any opinion as to the present conditions, counting out also the college professors who reply merely that dancing is prohibited in their institutions, the writers divide on the question in the order of 130 to 102, the first figure representing those who believe that we are in the midst of a dangerous moral decline, especially as it affects the younger generation. Including all the opponents of dancing, the figures would stand 202 to 102.



French Side Part Bob

The material supplied by the religious press has been kept separate, and will be treated in a special article next week. The other material is treated here.

STUDENT-EDITORS TO THE ATTACK

Dividing the replies roughly into those which attack and those which defend modern manners and morals, the student-editors of the country, most of them young men, are found to furnish quite as severe an indictment as is presented by their elders. The defense, while not numerically so well represented, is strongly presented by student-editors chiefly representing the larger colleges. The attack, which will be presented first, comes almost entirely from the smaller institutions. This, of course, raises the old question whether the big or the little college has the more brains and character, which is another story. The Hobart College *Herald* (Geneva, N. Y.) sums up the arguments of many of the attackers in this thoughtful fashion:

"The outstanding objection to the modern dance is that it is immodest and lacking in grace. It is not based on the natural and harmless instinct for rhythm, but on a craving for abnormal excitement.

"And what is it leading to? The dance in its process of its degradation has passed from slight impropriety to indecency, and now threatens to become brazenly shameless. From graceful coordination of movement it has become a syncopated embrace.

"Even the most callous devotee of modern dancing can not think with unconcern of the danger involved in any further excess. For American morals have undoubtedly degenerated with the dance.

"It can not be denied that many who indulge in modern dancing do not realize the nature of the incentive which leads them to do so. They like to dance; it becomes a habit, a fascinating obsession. Continual debauches of highly emotional character weaken the moral fiber. When a newer and more daring dance is introduced it is immediately accepted without question.

"Were this thoughtless immodesty restricted to the ball-room the danger would be great enough, but it is unconsciously

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carried into every-day life. Truly, then, it is imperative that a remedy be sought to arrest the development of the modern dance before this perilous state gets beyond control.”

In spite of the gallant remark of the Michigan Agricultural College *Holcad*, in an editorial entitled “Haven’t We Gone a Bit too Far?” that “the men are just as much to blame as the girls,” a great many student-editors, mostly, as one of them points out, men, avail themselves of the Adamic tradition to point an accusing finger. From the New York University *News* we quote the following:

“Overlooking the physiological aspects of women’s clothing, there is a strong moral aspect to this laxity of dress. When every dancing step discloses the entire contour of the dancer, it is small wonder that moralists are becoming alarmed. The materials, also, from which women’s evening dresses are made are generally of transparent cobweb. There is a minimum of clothes and a maximum of cosmetics, head-decorations, fans, and jewelry. It is, indeed, an alarming situation when our twentieth-century debutante comes out arrayed like a South Sea Island savage.”

The editor of the Nebraska *Augwan* assures us that he approves of THE DIGEST’s “attempt to make this world safe for masculinity,” and adds his own comment thus:

“Dress reform is sorely needed. This cry has never seemed to materially affect the kind and cut of modern feminine toggery except for the worse. Modesty has given away to daring, beauty to undisguised attempts to exhibit charms, and form has been supplanted by shape.

“The hobble skirt, slit skirt, and *décolleté* waist of the short long-ago brought a cry for dress reform. What have the reformers to say about the modern knee-length, kid-glove-fitting gown, with abbreviated top and bottom, to say nothing of the short-sleeved or sleeveless waists which accompany these modern ‘creations.’ The bathing girl of to-day is merely a foresight of the average girl of to-morrow, it would seem, from the trend of modern feminism toward elimination of essential apparel.”

The University of Maryland *Review* finds some of the dances “mere animal exhibitions of agility and feeling. There is nothing of grace in them, and such dances serve as an excuse for actions that would be severely censored anywhere but on the modern dance floor.” The Mercer University *Cluster* considers that “the young people who take part in them can not fail to lose their fine sense of decency and propriety. No boy who has high ideals would allow his sister to take part where such dances are tolerated.” The Round Up, of the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, believes that dancing such as is being done there “will lead to certain degeneration of decent society, and it is our understanding that this part of the country is no worse than any other.” The writer objects further:

“To glide gracefully over a floor, keeping time to the rhythm and harmony of music, is a pleasant recreation and is pleasing to witness, but to jig and hop around like a chicken on a red-hot stove, at the same time shaking the body until it quivers like a disturbed glass of jell-o, is not only tremendously suggestive but is an offense against common decency that would not be permitted in a semirespectable road-house.”

Many of the college editors, even those who apparently disapprove of exaggerated relaxation of the present day, use the whole subject principally as a basis for humor. The University of Illinois *Siren* explains for these objectors:

“Our attitude toward present-day dress has been one of ridicule rather than criticism. Poking fun does more good than sermons ever will on such a question—and if bow legs and thick ankles won’t curb the present patent indecency in women’s dress, morality surely hasn’t any chance.”

This same publication, however, furnishes a vivid arraignment of the modern dance, in the comments of a musician who played for college dances. The musician decided, one day, that he would play for



Marcel, or Water Waved Shingle



Horizontal Clubbed Bob

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no more such dances, and he gives his reason in these words:

"The girls—some of them, not all of them, of course—dance by me with their eyes closed, their cheeks inflamed, a little line of passion across their brows. They cling to their partners; they cling and clutch. They are like Madonnas, some of them, and yet they dance . . . that way. The men who use us for an audience are not capable—quite—of being terrible. They are exhibitors, rather. They show us the closed eyes and dusky-red cheeks of their partners—they wink at us, they turn their eyes heavenward, as if to say, 'You birds will know me, I wager, when next you see me. See what a state this girl is in. Hasn't she fallen for me, tho? Look at her; look at her!'—then they toddle out of sight."



Horizontal Clubbed Bob

"Since not all the powers can curtail for an instant the freedom of the gentler sex in following Dame Fashion wherever she may lead," remarks the *Baker Orange* (Baldwin City, Kan.) in a lighter vein, "it is thought that the male students of Baker will shortly petition for a rule to compel the wearing of blinkers by all men students, with the additional safeguard of dark glasses on windy days." While the *University of South Carolina Gamecock* seriously observes that "a callousness toward every appeal of decency is tending insidiously to destroy the very foundation of our standards governing once innocent recreations," the *Dartmouth Jack-o'-Lantern* attacks the subject in this frivolous manner, somewhat characteristic of the more sophisticated student papers:



Girlish Bob

"We're a dizzy people. The shimmy proves that, without the ghost of a need for further proof. We—any of us—will travel for miles on a black night through mud and rain, we will endure any discomfort, eventually to arrive at a place where the shimmy is being shaken. Young girls, pretty girls, vivacious girls trust themselves to come safely through the identical experiences many of their war-time sweethearts were enduring in France. They will shimmy for hours, indefinitely, undergoing the pangs of hunger and increasing bodily fatigue. The mental side probably is not very much taxed. The effect seems merely to be that next night and thereafter they are ready to shimmy wherever the shimmy is being vibrated. All this doesn't prove anything, except that we're a dizzy lot!"



Center Part Bob

The *Cornell Widow*, known in the periodical world as one of the cleverest and best-edited of student publications, presents this rimed review of the changes that dancing has undergone:

"Times have waxed and waned a lot, as old-timers can recall, and the dancing now is not what it used to be at all; only awkward rubes and hicks execute the bows and kicks that were clever parlor tricks when our *paters* threw a ball. Our progenitors took pleasure in a slow and solemn way; they would tread a stately measure that was anything but gay, and the orchestra would render sentimental stuff and tender which the folks of either gender wouldn't listen to to-day. With a flock of flutes and 'cellos, plus a harp and silver



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horn, these accomplished music fellows would play on till early morn; they could keep ‘Blue Danube’ flowing without letting up or slowing, till the bantams started crowing and they’d leave to hoe the corn. But your strictly modern dancers don’t go in so much for grace, and the minuet and lancers have been boosted from the place; for the ‘poetry of motion’ has been backed into the ocean, and a sort of ‘free-verse’ notion has possest our jaded race. Now the orchestra that’s snappy and a hit with all the boys, aims to keep the rabble happy with a slew of fancy noise; and the syncopated stammer of a cow-bell and a hammer add the sort of blare and glamour that contain a thousand joys. With a saxophone complaining, and a banjo chirping in; a fiddle that is straining to be heard above the din; and a handy man and drummer, who I think should be a plumber tho he’s mentioned as a comer—how they make the flappers grin. It is said they play with feeling, yet somehow it misses me; they are experts at concealing all the tune and melody; but for present ways of tripping, cheek to cheek and closely gripping, I admit they’re simply ripping, and they suit it to a T!”



And as for the maids of yesterday and of to-day, says *The Widow*:

“They used to wrap their hair in knobs fantastic, high, and queer; but now they cut it short in bobs or curl it round their ear. The skirts they wore would scrape the street, and catch the dust and germs; they’re now so far above their feet, they’re not on speaking terms. The things they do and wear to-day, and never bat an eye, would make their foggy forebears gray, they’d curl right up and die.”

