

PRESENTING

# TOBÉ

WORLD'S OUTSTANDING AND HIGHEST PAID STYLIST. BELOW IS THE STORY OF HER AMAZING CAREER; OPPOSITE, IS HER EXCITING PLAN FOR GETTING FUN OUT OF FASHION

**N**EARLY twenty years ago, ship news reporters met a trans-Atlantic liner down the bay and talked with a woman who had made a name for herself in department store work. She had been abroad to look over the fashions in Europe.

"Just what is your profession?" they asked.

She admitted she didn't know. So, then and there, she and the reporters decided she was a "stylist." And thus was born a new profession.

This woman, who became the first official stylist, is Tobé (Mrs. Herbert Davis, neé Taubé Coller). Now she is head of Tobé, Incorporated, through which she does for more than a hundred stores in America—and some in Canada, England, Australia, Norway and Sweden—what she did for Franklin Simon for nine years until she left to start her own business in 1927.

Tobé isn't an oracle, she isn't a designer—she simply knows from experience, better than anyone else, what styles you are going to like best and what will be most useful to you. From the great fashion salons of Paris, from tailored England, from America, she culls the newest and best of the season's creations.

She goes to the ultra-smart resorts; she keeps a weather eye on the world's ten best-dressed women; she never misses an opening night at the opera or a new artist who might affect fashions; she reads every word about clothes that is published. And the reason for it all is Mrs. Jones, the American woman consumer.

"I don't just *think* you can be smart on almost nothing a year," Tobé tells Mrs. Jones. "I know it. This is not possible in any country except the United States. You have to study the problem, of course, but it's not too difficult."

Tobé, for all her importance and income (estimated at anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year), is completely feminine. Although in her forties, she has an air of youthful naiveté. She has lacquered finger-tips, she wears a great deal of simple black for business, but relaxes in exotic colors in her lushly furnished apartment that actually has a front door all its own—a rarity in Manhattan. People are her passion. Her country place in Rye, New York, is large enough to hold loads of them. She knows thousands by name and thinks nothing of entertaining a dozen at dinner, which is served by a Japanese butler who takes napkin and tea details very seriously. Her food is so famous that it has acquired the label "cuisine," and guests eat lightly at breakfast and lunch in order fully to appreciate her dinners. No matter how busy she is, she plans all meals and cooks, too, when she has time.

"You see, I was born in Milwaukee where my father had a men's clothing store and, as girls were supposed

## *Tobé*

to marry, I studied home economics at Milwaukee-Downer College. My home is my only hobby."

After her graduation, her father came East, bringing Tobé with him, and proceeded to lose his money in a business venture. Faced with an empty exchequer, his daughter had either to marry or go to work. She followed newspaper ads and found a job answering letters for the National Cloak and Suit Company. "Because the men I knew were awfully nice, but appallingly boring," she explains, "and I had a horror of being dull. I chose a job rather than marriage."

After a few weeks, she decided to start a more inspiring career and applied as a secretary to Felix A. Lacks, the London ostrich-feather king. Having had no secretarial training she got the job on the basis that anyone could write shorthand but not everyone was willing to work as hard at other things as she was. Her new job required versatility. Ostrich feathers were going out of fashion and as her employer turned to other fields she turned with him. During her year and a half with him she did many odd jobs, among which were the opening of a hat shop in Chicago and the buying of towels and soap for shipment to South America.

Business, she finally decided, was just like a school, and a department store was kindergarten, so she went to B. Altman's in New York and applied for a selling job. In spite of the fact that she horrified the employing agent by asking for \$25 a week instead of the \$22 she had been getting, she was hired, but they fired her after a few weeks. "I wasn't diplomatic enough in those days to sell hats," she says. From there she went to Macy's for a while, but she still couldn't sell hats.

"It wasn't until I worked as secretary to Mr. Hickson of Nelson-Hickson, smart dress shop, that I began to notice clothes. Here I saw hundreds of women and style consciousness began to seep into my mind."

The next year, 1915, her husband-to-be and a friend financed a dress shop for her. She did a rushing business but somehow Tobé just couldn't make ends meet. It was here that the late Franklin Simon discovered her and asked her to work in his store.

"It was a little odd," says she, "because he didn't assign me to a job. I was told to make my own. I wandered all over the store and finally brought him a list of criticisms. There were no flared dresses in the store, or the shoes were all too expensive, or why didn't he have black organdy this year, and countless other things. That grew to be my job, and later I was sent as a fashion scout, the first, to Europe."

Although she was famous and extremely well-paid in her field, Tobé's husband, a retired manufacturer whom she had married during her Franklin Simon career, urged her to set up her own business. Under his experienced business hand, she gathered in a co-worker or two, and started her own fashion service. From a three-page fashion report that went, in the early days of her venture, to Stern Brothers in New York, Bamberger in Newark, Jordan Marsh in Boston and Charles Stevens' in Chicago, she has built up an unbelievably influential service. Stores pay her according to the size and population of the city in which they are located. Manufacturers come to her for advice.

"How do I know what is going to be good this year? It isn't intuition. I ask everyone who might know something about it, I consider the cycles of fashion, both my staff and I know stores and keep in touch with them constantly. Most of all, I observe people living, and I know what clothes will be useful and smart."

*Tobé*

Tobé wakes every morning at five or six o'clock and works in bed until breakfast time. Then she goes to the office and appointments begin, often as early as eight-thirty. She may discuss the future of woollens with a Canadian client at nine, cruise clothes with a department at eleven, consult with her assistants from eleven-thirty until twelve, and finish the morning by dictating letters while a manicurist does her nails. By then it is time to go to lunch with the president of one of her stores and hear all about his son who shows a tiresome bent for aviation instead of business. She is a tireless listener. The afternoon is much the same and at six o'clock she descends to her waiting car and chauffeur and rushes home to don a tea gown and prepare for a horde of guests. After dinner there is sure to be something new she ought to see—a new show with important costumes, or an exhibit of *surréaliste* art. She never misses anything and her assistants declare she remembers as much as Jim Farley. Having her fortune told is her favorite pastime. She has a cat and a wire-haired terrier.

Her offices at 500 Fifth Avenue are refreshing, feminine, done in peach and blue. Tobé (people call her either Tobé or Miss Tobé) sits behind a minute and unimpressive desk. The Venetian blinds are bright red. Red blinds she wanted and red blinds she has, no matter how bitterly the building owners complained that they looked peculiar from the street. Her staff, about twenty-five, are very fond of her and will swear she is the best diplomat in the world. She considers the feelings of the office boy as well as those of her customers. She is phenomenally patient with learners and so lavishly generous that she requires a restraining hand to prevent her from spending her last nickel to please someone. Her staff works hard, but not half so hard as she does. If anyone she knows seems unhappy she is terribly concerned. Stores write her saying that her presence is an inspiration, please come again. She never saves anything longer than is necessary and goes through her desk like a tornado, throwing papers away.

# DRESS UP AND LIVE

By *Tobé*

**I** CAN'T tell you how glad I am to meet you all. For years I've been thinking about you as "our customers" or "the American woman"—grand-sounding titles but too impersonal. From now on I hope to be able to say "my friends"—in Cleveland, Galesburg, Seattle, everywhere.

Many of you who are reading this have read "Wake up and Live" and have thought, "That's marvelous. I must do something about it." Well, translated into purely feminine language, that means "Dress up and Live"—and that's what you should do about it.

Clothes and fashion of all sorts are the background of the modern woman's life, and any woman who ignores them or accepts them in a routine way is not fulfilling herself, not getting the best out of life.

For fashions in clothes and fashions in houses and amusements are but the reflection of fashions in living. And believe it or not, fashions in living are changing almost as fast as fashions in clothes are. As a matter of fact, as a clothes expert, I'd say that fashions in clothes are hard put to it to keep up with changing fashions in living.

We are living in very thrilling times. The world today is a very exciting one, a world that bears little resemblance to the world of a hundred years ago. Have you ever stopped to think what has been the guiding motive behind all the changing fashions? Roughly speaking, it's just this—we want *more* than we have today—better clothes, better homes, automobiles, travel: we want more fun.

And every one, male and female, old and young, rich and poor, is busily engaged in getting what he wants.

Most of us have started with our homes. We've got bathrooms, automobiles, mechanical refrigerators. That's fine, but neither oil burners nor air-conditioning can make up for the passing years of a woman's youth or the joy of living that she misses if she sacrifices her attractiveness at this time.

"But we can't afford it," you groan. Oh, yes, you can! And believe me when I tell you that, for I know what I'm talking about. Clothes are my job and I know that there



*Tobé*

## DRESS UP

are no price boundaries in fashion today. You can buy or make good-looking clothes at whatever price you can afford to pay—little or much.

Can't afford it? Can you afford to watch your husband's eager interest in you cool? Can you afford to let your children's faith in your supremacy waver? Can you afford to let a duller witted but brighter looking girl snatch the good jobs away from you?

Those are the things that you cannot afford—so dress up and live!

How shall we go about it? Well, here is the first lesson; here is the way to begin. Follow these dress-

*Tobé d-live* exercises, beginning right this minute. Prop DELINEATOR open on your dressing table, and check off each exercise—but not until after you have done it.



### EXERCISES TO MAKE YOU DRESS UP AND LIVE

**ONE...** Go look at yourself in a mirror (a full-length one if possible) in a strong light. How do you look from head to toe? Hold up a hand mirror. How do you look in back? Not quite as well as you know you could, as you know you have? Well, then—

**TWO...** Get on the scales. Are you getting a wee bit fat? Something will definitely have to be done about that—perhaps diet, perhaps exercise; maybe it's just a new foundation you need. It may take a little time so let's get on, meanwhile, with our self-inventory.

**THREE...** Open your closet door and take out your newest dress. Did you buy it because it was exactly right for you? Because it did things for you? Or because it was cheap? If the latter, resolve never to do that again. Resolve to have only clothes that were either made just for you or that look as if they were.

**FOUR...** Go to the hat department and try on some new hats. Do you like them? No? Well, don't blame it all on the hats. Some of them are crazy but certainly not all. Maybe it's the way you are wearing your hair. Have you changed it lately? Your hair-do is as important as a new hat.

**FIVE...** Go to a hairdresser, even if the money has to come out of another part of the budget. Go to a good one, put yourself in his hands, let him do the suggesting, then follow his suggestions for yourself at home.

**SIX...** Show off your new hair-do, your new hat, your new dress with pride. Don't be timid and say, "Do you like it?" Say, instead, "Isn't this marvelous! It makes me look ten years younger." Husbands prefer to be told about things like that.

## DRESS UP

**SEVEN...** This is the last and golden rule for "dress up and live"—

In the morning say,

"It's time to get up and dress up."

In the evening say,

"I must dress for dinner."

At night say,

"I must dress for bed"—*Not* undress for the night.

And that's the way you'll start living again.

[OldMagazineArticles.com](http://OldMagazineArticles.com)