

# Middlesex Advertiser and County Gazette

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## WOMEN WEAR LESS

But Have More Dresses

### EVOLUTION OF THE DRAPERY TRADE

"In Victorian days as much as seven to ten yards were required for a dress, and underneath that there were further quantities of cloth. To-day the modern women can make a dress out of three yards of 36 in. material."

When Mr. J. Suter told this to his fellow Uxbridge Rotarians at the weekly luncheon on Thursday, he did not forget to add that women though wearing far less than previously required a larger variety of clothes, whereas in the old days they were more or less content with one or two dresses.

Mr. Suter was giving a "My Job" talk, and as a director of Messrs. Suters Ltd., his remarks dealt chiefly with the drapery trade with which he is connected.

He pointed out that it was one of the oldest trades, and possibly one of the most important. In the ancient days merchants sold their materials in the squares and market places, and there were, of course, the traveller who took his wares round the villages. Very largely the stalls had given way to shops with smart windows and interior displays, and in large towns there was the need for the modern store where customers could purchase any commodity required. Travellers still made their village calls, but it had become the rule for people living in outlying districts to make a point of visiting the nearest town at frequent intervals so as to see the shops and the greater variety of merchandise displayed.

### Quick Fashion Changes

Fashion had changed in style, but it was a notable fact that materials used in earlier times were still favoured and used. Some materials were better made and finished; others were not so good. The use of flannel had diminished, and the same could be said of calico. Artificial silk had to some extent taken its place. Fashion changed quickly as drapers well knew; they had to watch the sales carefully and where the demand was dropping for a particular type of article, a quick clearance had to be effected. The length of dresses was also observed; a dress that was too short or too long was of very little value. It had been said that men did not study fashion, but Mr. Suter disagreed by contrasting the length of men's overcoats to-day with what they were a few years ago. Men had copied the ladies in so far as the length of clothing was concerned.

Mr. Suter gave a comprehensive idea of the varied assortment of stock which had to be carried by the modern store and described the method of staffing so that customers should not be kept waiting. The public were protected by the fact that a large quantity of the stock was sold at fixed retail prices fixed by the manufacturers. Other articles were sold at a competitive price—just profit prices.

Connected with the trade was the Linen and Woollen Drapers' Institution and the Warehousemen, Clerks, and Drapery Schools. The former had homes for the aged and infirm employers and employees, and the Drapers' Institution had schools for boys and girls. Where both parents were dead, the children were provided with free education, food and clothing.

Drapery was one of the trades that still liked to encourage apprenticeship. Premiums were not now taken as was the case years ago, the assistants being paid a certain sum the first year, increasing by increments the next two years, by which time they would have learned their trade. There were no blind alley occupations in the trade, and provided an assistant had a good training, there was every chance to earn good money.