

London letter

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LONDON LETTER



ROTER MODELS, LONDON

Cotton Jacquard by Kircheimer Ltd., London, manufactured by *Max Kircheimer Sons & Co., Zurich.*

Photo George Miles.

During the Autumn and Winter months, when the last of the seasonal visitors have again gone home, London seems to recoil on itself, in the same way as nature herself, and its rich inheritance of the past seems to become more pronounced and more intimately with us. London can never capture the gaiety and lightheartedness of Paris nor the carefree mood of old Vienna, instead it seems to possess the quiet serenity of a wise old lady — held in respect and revered by those who really know her.

As I sit this evening overlooking a quiet and famous London Square and watch its yellow lights and dark shadowed

trees, I cannot help being deeply aware of how nature compels us to conform to her prescribed seasonal rhythms and patterns although we are inclined to forget her in our accepted city lives and ceaseless daily hurrying. And so it naturally follows that the shops in the West End of London and in the many streets and thoroughfares so well-known throughout the world should also quietly change their window dressings and displays from trying to catch the Summer eye and interest of the visitor to catering in a quieter mood almost exclusively for the local inhabitants. At this time of year our clothes seem to be more restrained but certainly still as



ROTER MODELS, LONDON

Pure silk by *Rudolf Brauchbar & Co., Zurich.*

Photo George Miles.

made collections will certainly be adapted for the brighter and warmer days. However, from what I have been able to see to date from the new ranges of fabrics and the earlier spring range showings I do really believe there will be much to choose from for all women.

One of the most pleasant visits I have recently made was to the wholesale showroom of Messrs. Kircheimer Ltd., who have a magnificent range of Swiss fabrics. A most striking Swiss fabric which seems to offer new possibilities is a Cotton Jacquard. It possesses an almost silken appearance and has sufficient weight to be suitable for both dresses and two-piece ensembles. Messrs. Roter Models have already used this Cotton Jacquard to create a charming two-piece suit. This same fabric has also been selected for the forthcoming season by Michael Sherard, Rima and Nabre Mantles; Messrs. Dickins and Jones, the well-known Regent Street Store will be retailing in the piece. Kircheimer's are also featuring a cotton and nylon Jacquard which has been chosen by Frank Usher for his new collection and will again be sold by the yard to the public by Dickins & Jones and also by Liberty's. Another luxurious looking Swiss fabric presented by the same firm is an entirely new 100 % cotton bouclé with a regular horizontal "nobble" and is so eminently suitable for summer costumes.

Maybe the story of English traditions and customs has been playing on my mind because the major store I chose to visit for a closer inspection of Swiss fabrics and made-up garments was Marshall & Snelgrove Ltd. Established in 1837, this firm very soon enjoyed the patronage of "the best people" and of the County gentry. Because of this early success, branches were very soon opened in the main provincial towns, such as Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester, etc.

My first visit on this call was to the Knitwear Department, which maintains the good reputation of the store by being highly selective. One of the most attractive designs was by Swissnit in a short semi-evening gown, using black jersey with a gold metallic thread or grey with silver. Evening wear in jersey is a novel idea and one which may well find an increasing appeal. The gown itself was classic-cut with shoulder tipped neckline, a matching bolero accompanying the gown. The same department has fascinating range of nightdresses in pastel shades made in pure wool nunsveiling with embroidered neckline and bodice or alternatively with a neat multi-tuck motif. This range miraculously combines sensibility with femininity.

Finally, I visited the fabric department where I was shown a delightful voile double-face; that is voile woven on to an under-surface of shot taffeta and thereby making an interesting repeat motif. Produced by the silk mills former Naef Bros. it is obviously effective for theatre, evening or cocktail wear — but it might well make a particularly attractive Ascot or garden party gown. As I walked out back into the London streets I remembered a slogan of a few years ago "It's good if it's Swiss..."

Ruth Fonteyn

graceful and practical. The everyday winter coats, suits, ensembles, etc. for the average housewife and city worker may not always be exciting but they can, on the whole, be relied upon to give very good service for the price paid. The evening gowns and cocktail dresses, however, seem to demand a traditional English sense of poise in the wearer if they are to be seen at their best. It may be because of our rich past and traditional dignified stately splendour that we English regard poise, good bearing and breeding so highly; that makes us more reserved in our relations with others and why we adapt new ideas to suit our own sense of proportion.

Writing of proportions makes me think of the present changes in British sizings. Since the war a number of surveys have been made to enable manufacturers to better the fit of their ready-made garments; the facts revealed by these surveys seem to have suddenly proved to manufacturers throughout the country that there is a very wide market amongst the smaller women and they are now almost falling over themselves to produce for this market. Now we can pick and choose for the first time and we can have our whims obeyed and I for one am delighting in it!

The indications are that by next spring and summer we 2 000 000 small women will be having the time of our lives — ideas which Christian Dior announced last September but too late to be incorporated in the autumn and winter ready-