

London letter

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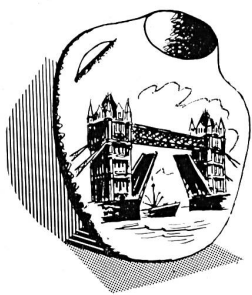
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London Letter

Since the New Year a greater feeling of buoyancy and optimism has shown itself in the ready-made section of the trade; the bottle-neck occasioned by fiscal measures and sluggish consumer demands has cleared but in most textile manufacturing sections there is still much cautiousness. Buying by retailers has definitely been bolder — even if sometimes still careful.

A few fine days in April and a pre-Whitsun heat-wave have caused a run by the public on cotton dresses so that the present position seems to indicate that even if dress-manufacturers could produce the re-orders they would experience difficulty in obtaining cloth. But such a phase is nowhere near sufficient to bring any happiness to the cotton mills of Lancashire, where there has been considerable anxiety for much of the post-war years. Nevertheless, whatever problems the cotton industry may be facing there is a definite shortage of cotton dresses on the British market this summer. Such a situation has not happened for some seven years and customers are certainly not accustomed to being told by assistants "If you don't buy now we may not have any more left by next week". Shop and store buyers who have been caught short have had the unusual experience of chasing from one wholesale showroom to the other in order to find replacements. Shirtwaister styles have proved to be the most popular — and in the West End of London at a retail selling price of approximately 90/-d.

The first few weeks of autumn collection shows to the trade catering for the mass markets have also reflected an optimistic mood by both buyers and manufacturers. Both the teen-age or younger set and adult markets are even more clearly defined but in both the general tendency is towards "feminine clother" — though for the younger market it might be better to use the term "vivacious". Crossing right through the ranges, coats, dresses and jersey-wear are checks of almost every size, subdued or vibrant. They certainly give emphasis to the feeling towards gaiety this autumn, in some cases mohair has been incorporated to give an extra surface interest.

Optimism is perhaps at its highest among average priced cost manufacturers and buyers; after three very mediocre years it is felt that something new has been achieved by fur trimmings — frequently of mink. Even



STEHLI SEIDEN A.G., ZURICH

Chiné lamé with Peau de soie
Modèle A. Perlmutter Ltd., London
Photo John Challis / Hugh White Studios

in the very medium price ranges the additional cost is small — certainly not so much as to deter the average woman from enjoying her “bit of fur” — especially mink!

Fur-trimmed suits have had a particularly good reception from the trade and there can be no doubt that suits in general, because of their varied and attractive stylings and the successive mild weather autumns experienced during the past few years, will ensure another good season. The jacket lengths and stylings vary from the short “cropped” straight cut to seven-eighth length models — strongly featured in many collections because of their practical aspects. Most suits are being made in coat-weight woollens with tweeds at the top of the list.

For evening wear there will be an almost equal choice between short and long gowns; the first of these is usually preferred in London and the second in provincial towns and “County” areas where long frocks are considered to be more suitable for formal occasions such as Hunt Balls etc.

The important teen-age or younger set is becoming increasingly recognised by manufacturers, some of whom have now formed a Teen-Age Fashion Group. One firm has already gone so far as to form a teen-age fashion panel to obtain their reactions and suggestions. Coats on the whole, are casual in styling, easy to slip-on; day dresses in checks, mohairs, bouclés etc. are still featuring a small waist and full skirts; party frocks bear the same silhouette but greatly strengthened with waists really whittled down and even fuller skirts, cummerbunds, high necklines in front, plunging low at the back.

While some British fashion writers were being entertained and shown Swiss fashions in Zurich — some of which will be seen in London and other centres during the Swiss Fortnight (5th-17th October) — a selected list of overseas buyers and journalists were attending The London Fashion Week. This in fact was the first really serious and concerted effort to sell British fashions overseas; everything possible was done to make over 150 important overseas buyers welcome. From the combined « sample » opening presentation, buyers were then able to see whatever collections interested them most in the manufacturers own showrooms; on the social side functions were held in the midst of some of London's traditional splendour — a reception given in the City by the Lord Mayor, another at the House of Commons, seats for the Opera in the glorious surroundings of Glyndebourne and even a “pub-crawl” to some of London's old famous hostelrys. The London Fashion Week has been a success handsomely exceeding the hopes of some of its more cautious organisers; spring and summer fashions for 1960 will be shown in November, so London now enters the lists for overseas trade with

STEHLI SEIDEN A.G., ZURICH

Romain envers satin all silk / tout soie
Modèle Roter Models Ltd., London
Photo David Olins





BISCHOFF TEXTILES S.A.,
SAINT-GALL

Embroidered nylon
Nylon brodé
Modèle Jenny Hockley Ltd.,
London
Photo Tunbridge Ltd.



HEER & CO. S.A., THALWIL

Draplyne fabric (rayon and wool)
Tissu Draplyne (rayonne et laine)
Modèle Ladycourt of London
Photo Bill Wood / Lewis Studios

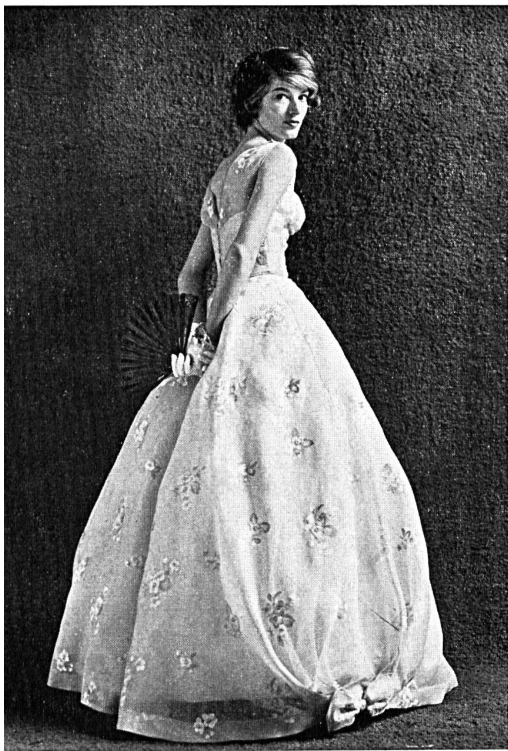
JACOB ROHNER LTD.,
REBSTEIN

Coat and embroidered dress
in imitation linen fabric
with Minicare finish
Manteau et robe brodée
en tissu imitation lin,
finissage Minicare
Photo David Olins



Zurich, Milan, Dusseldorf and Stockholm. And perhaps one should add Paris now that she too is entering the ready-to-wear competition! Whatever friendly rivalry may develop in international trading in the fashion world — let Swiss textile producers, piece goods and ready-to-wear manufacturers unfailingly remember that their greatest strength lies in quality goods. Those of us who live beyond the Swiss frontiers have always learnt to respect Switzerland's reputation for quality; there is an ever increasing number of people who come to realise that quality is an investment not an extravagance.

Ruth Fonteyn



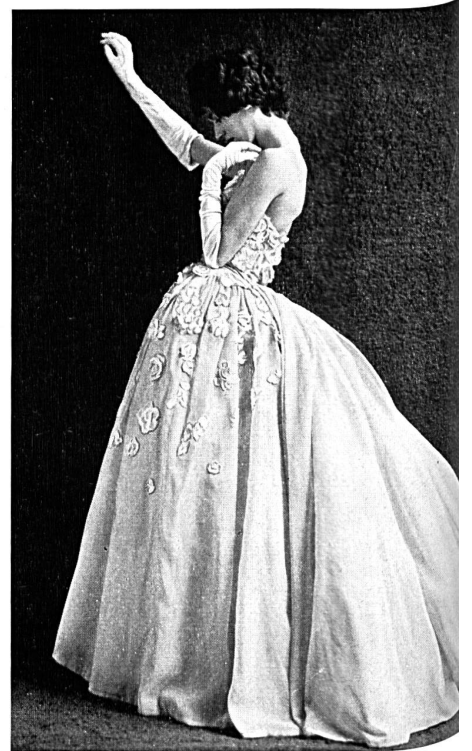
FORSTER WILLI & CO., SAINT-GALL

Multicolour embroidery on cotton
organdie
Organdi de coton brodé multicolore
Modèle Victor Stiebel, London
Photo John Donaldson / Eldon Studios



FORSTER WILLI & CO., SAINT-GALL

Embroidered cotton organdie allover
Laize d'organdi de coton brodée
Modèle John Cavanagh, London
Photo John Donaldson / Eldon Studios



FORSTER WILLI & CO., SAINT-GALL

Embroidered flowers appliqué
on cotton organdie
Fleurs brodées détachées
sur organdi de coton
Modèle John Cavanagh, London
Photo John Donaldson / Eldon Studios



L. ABRAHAM & CO. SILKS LTD.,
ZURICH

Pure silk organdie
Organdi pure soie
Modèle Roter Models Ltd., London
Photo David Olins



L. ABRAHAM & CO. SILKS LTD.,
ZURICH

Satin
Modèle Roter Models Ltd., London
Photo John French



L. ABRAHAM & CO. SILKS LTD.,
ZURICH

Silver embroidered pure silk chiffon
Chiffon pure soie brodé d'argent
Modèle Roter Models Ltd., London
Photo David Olins