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Letter from London

The «Top Eleven»

It might be interesting to know something of the fascinating personalities of the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers, the controlling body of London Haute Couture.

Headed by the Lady Pamela Berry as President and Mr. Edward Rayne (Royal Shoemaker) as newly elected Chairman, the Group numbers eleven members, all men, known as the «Top Eleven».

*Film "Surprise Package"
Sketch "No 6" for
Mitzi Gaynor.*



*Black lace over
pink organza!*

Robe de Jo Mattli pour la vedette américaine Mitzi Gaynor dans le film « Surprise Package » ; dessin spécialement exécuté pour « Textiles Suisses ».

La robe est en broderie noire de Forster Willi & Co., Saint-Gall, sur organdi de soie rose.

Jo Mattli's dress for Mitzi Gaynor in the film « Surprise Package » ; specially sketched for « Textiles Suisses » ; the dress is in black embroidery by Forster Willi & Co., Saint-Gall, on pink silk organza.

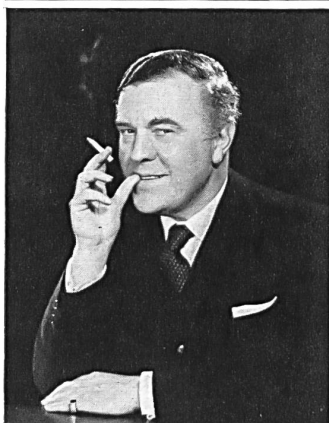
Mattli



LADY PAMELA BERRY



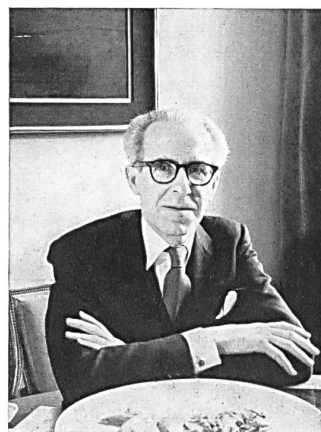
MR. EDWARD RAYNE



NORMAN HARTNELL



JOHN CAVANAGH



VICTOR STIEBEL



JO MATTLI

Lady Pamela Berry, the daughter of the Earl of Birkenhead, is noted for her flair for smart dressing and this attractive and slender brunette is a striking figure on the London social and fashion scene.

Edward Rayne, the Chairman of the group, with his charming wife Morna as a delightful and efficient hostess, will bring vitality and strength to this highly responsible post.

The eleven dictators of the English mode are: Norman Hartnell, Victor Stiebel, Hardy Amies, John Cavanagh, Michael, Ronald Paterson, Michael Sherard, Mattli, Worth, Charles Creed and Owen of Lachasse.

The Cambridge educated Hartnell, the grandest of all fashion designers, is a favourite of the Royal family, and premier dressmaker to Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth of England.

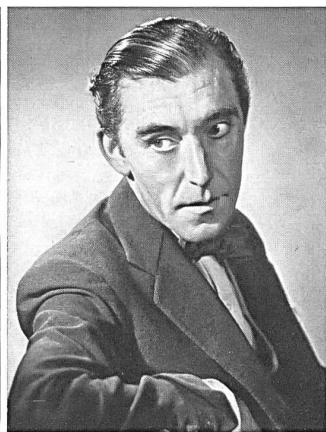
His designs of spectacular and breathtakingly beautiful court and tour gowns, especially for the Royal wardrobes, are well known, but his greatest triumph surely was in the astonishingly beautiful and simple wedding gown of sheerest white organzas, which he created for Her Royal Highness the Princess Margaret. Following this splendid gown which drew world-wide applause were the tiny bridesmaids in their lovely frocks of white embroidered Swiss organzas by Forster Willi of St-Gall. These beautiful little dresses were re-created from earlier designs for the young Princess Margaret and the Queen when they were children.

Hartnell told me that he is now busy on his designs for the Queen for her coming tour of India in which he intends to use a good deal of Swiss material. « I always use them, he said, in every collection and especially for Royal Tours. The Royal Ladies love them and often ask for them. They like them for day wear and for evening, particularly in the hot climates when the Swiss fabrics remain so fresh and immaculate looking. »

Hartnell is the author of one of the most beautifully presented books ever written on fashion. Entitled « Silver and Gold », it is the story of a lifetime devotion to fashion (he is nearing his sixties) and reproduces many of the



HARDY AMIES



MICHAEL

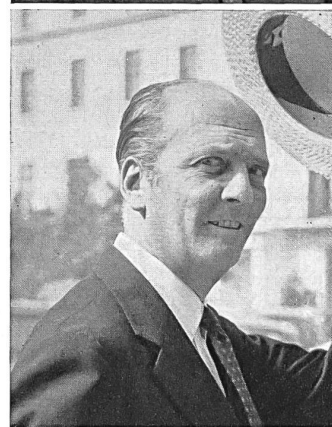


RONALD PATERSON

OWEN OF LACHASSE



CHARLES CREED



OWEN HYDE-CLARKE



MICHAEL SHERARD



magnificent designs worn over decades by Royalty and the famous. It is interesting to follow the career of this world famous man who, in his understanding of the fabulous and gracious era through which he himself has passed (and the passing of which he deeply regrets) seems to stand curiously and with great dignity in a place of his own at the top of the « Top Eleven ».

John Cavanagh made a great hit with his latest collection. Very « avant-garde », with a distinct leaning towards contemporary Paris fashion and knowing little personally of the earlier decades (he is in the thirties), he speaks the language of the Sixties with a strong and vital voice, not to be denied. The whole atmosphere of his charming Couture House in Curzon Street and the charmingly colourful Boutique attached at street level, breathes Avenue Georges V of Paris.

Here one finds the smartest women, and the best of international boutique goods, and Switzerland is well represented in specially designed mules of Bally of Switzerland, silk scarves from St-Gall, dainty aprons of Swiss embroideries and in Forster Willy guipure lace, the gigantic tea cosies beloved of the English families for their English « four o'clock ».

Victor Stiebel, Princess Margaret's dressmaker, looks like an eminent surgeon of great charm and gentleness; this is somehow incorporated into the graceful garments he designs, and he is well known for his lovely gowns for top social debutantes, for which he uses quite often the beautiful Swiss embroideries and guipures with which we are so familiar.

He told me that Princess Margaret chose some Swiss materials for her trousseau and understood the quality and beauty of these fabrics.

One of the gifts which was graciously accepted by Her Royal Highness on the occasion of her marriage, was a length of exquisite black eyelet-embroidered sheer organza from Union Ltd. of St-Gall.

Jo Mattli is a Swissborn London designer who has been in this country for thirty-five years and is best known for his cocktail and evening gowns. He has had a lot of



SAGER & CIE, DÜRRENÄSCH

Jersey de laine noir, brun et blanc
Swiss wool jersey in black, brown
and white

Model by Reed Crawford, London



SAGER & CIE, DÜRRENÄSCH

Tweed de laine mauve avec fil Lurex
Mauve woollen tweed with Lurex
thread

Model by Reed Crawford, London



success with film designs and recently completed six gowns for the American film actress Mitzi Gaynor for her forthcoming film « Surprise Package », one of which is in Forster-Willi black guipure lace over pale pink organza.

Hardy Amies is a good looking bachelor, favourite of top actresses (Vivien Leigh is one). He too enjoys Royal Patronage and is becoming recognised as a designer of men's wear.

Michael, an elegant, idealistic and aristocratic Irishman, is a master at his craft, and makes wonderful and wearable clothes which are as much sought after by top-smart women as a Balenciaga.

Ronald Paterson is a lean, clean-cut Scottish creator married to a former fashion journalist. His latest collec-

Un coin de la Boutique de John Cavanagh : cosy à thé en broderie de Forster Willi, mules de Bally, pantoufles de voyage en tissu de Mettler et tablier en organdi brodé suisse

A corner of John Cavanagh's Boutique : tea cosy in Forster Willi embroidery, mules by Bally, travelling slippers in a Mettler fabric and Swiss embroidered organdy apron

FORSTER WILLI & CO.,
SAINT-GALL

Guipure noire
Black guipure
Model Norman Hartnell,
London



tion was extremely feminine and showed a flair for linking unusual colours together.

Owen of Lachasse has a great feeling for architectural balance and a feeling for exciting materials, as his knowledge of textiles first brought him into the fashion world, where he commands a high respect.

Charles Creed, who charges about £ 90 for a suit, is traditional. His clothes are beautifully made and very English.

Owen Hyde Clarke joined the House of Worth in 1953 and excels in ballgowns and debutante clothes.

The youngest designer of the « Top Eleven » is Michael



HEER & CO. S.A., THALWIL

Tissu soie et laine

Silk and wool fabric

Modèle W. & O. Marcus Ltd.,

London

Photo John Adriaan at John

French

Sherard, who designs mainly for the theatre.

Here, then, is the picture of London's « Top Eleven » and behind every scene is a dedicated man, who writes

his signature surely and decisively across each garment he presents with his collection twice a year for world press approval.



HEER & CO. S.A., THALWIL

Tissu soie et laine

Silk and wool fabric

Modèle W. & O. Marcus Ltd.,
London

Photo John Adriaan at John
French

More than ever the importance of the fabric is recognised and more and more ravishing laces, beautifully designed and colourful silks, rich brocades recently

confirmed in the Paris collections, the superb wools of increasing depth and feel, and the superbly finished cottons from the mills of the great Swiss textiles makers,

take their place proudly under the signature of London's « Top Eleven ».

Edward Rayne, Chairman of the powerful group, has this to say : « We have never, in fashion, been as fabric minded as we are today ; milliners, shoemakers, designers. With the growing beauty of design and the feeling in fashion for richness of colouring, this trend will

increase. I have, this Season, even used Swiss woollen materials in my designs for shoes which have gone all over the world. » « Never has fabric been so important to the finished creation. »

London's « Top Eleven » have spoken !

Margot Macrae



A. NAEF & CIE S.A.,
FLAWIL

Galon de guipure
Etched lace galloon
Modèle Christian Dior,
London