

Letter from Rio de Janeiro

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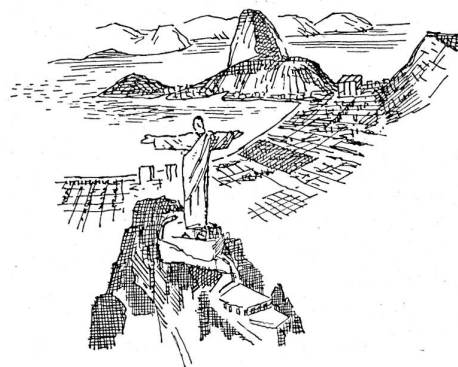
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LETTER FROM RIO DE JANEIRO



Time, which appears to pass by more and more rapidly every year, makes the seasons fly past at a rate which it is difficult to get accustomed to.

We say "seasons", but is this really the right word to use to define the different periods of the year? Certainly, if the calendar were not so relentless in its regularity, we should often be hard put to say exactly which season we were in. Is it perhaps this uncertainty or capriciousness of the weather prevailing in our latitude that makes the climate of Rio de Janeiro one of the most pleasant there is? Unfortunately, the fashion industries, so closely bound up with the seasons and atmospheric influences, have difficulty in adapting themselves to the whims of the weather prevailing in the tropics.

It is more than a month now since Rio should have begun its movement towards a new winter fashion. But the heavens have decided otherwise: overhead the sky is a brilliant blue, life on the beaches is still in full swing and yet, without being able to explain why, everyone feels a strange uneasiness and looks inquiringly at the slightest sign of cloud as if it could tell when the joke will come to an end.

It is a well-known fact everywhere that when a season does not behave as it should, all attempts to give vitality to the kind of life that should flourish naturally are only doomed to failure. Winter for us has dragged itself out into a drought; summer took place under a deluge of rain. To-day the climate appears to be taking a rest from its whims, but nobody's heart is in it.

All the collections are ready, and as we follow in the footsteps of the fashions of the northern hemisphere, which everyone has been able to see and judge for themselves already, we are all very impatient to experiment with their adaptation.

Last season's trend towards a more modern choice of fabric designs met with considerable success. Only the lines of the dresses remained what may be called true to tradition. The fabrics, which at first only allowed themselves a few cautious flights towards a more modern style, in

a very short time exceeded all limits and contributed to making the streets gay with the most daring, the most brilliant and the most unexpected designs. But here we are up against the problem of winter again. It is a question of maintaining the gaiety and enthusiasm aroused in fashion by the novelty of last season's fabrics, without losing sight of the classicism exclusively reserved for the more dressy months.

This year, black will once again undoubtedly be the basic colour of any outfit that lays claim to chic. In order not to break with the trends of last summer, the same black will not be used alone. Numerous collections already include several models in which black is used in prints in such infinite combinations that the grounds are hardly visible any more. This makes it possible to increase still further the essentially modern character that has been given to Brazilian fashions these last few months.

In spite of all these trends, dresses in Swiss embroidery, figured and embroidered organdies, etc. are, as always, the most sought after.

It is amazing to see how many of these wonders continue to be paraded up and down the Avenue Atlantica at the fashionable hour, and this in spite of the new suspension of imports of Swiss fabrics. Brazilian women continually strain their ingenuity — and with great success — to find what spells quality, daintiness and freshness for them. The word "Swiss" attached to a fabric has no equivalent anywhere, and experiments made with these articles increase each year the demand for them, which remains well above the level of what imports allow us.

A momentary relaxation of the barriers in the way of imports of Swiss textiles very fortunately made it possible, just in time, to replenish stocks which are already not far from being exhausted once again. We can see no real means, for the moment at least, of replenishing them with a view to meeting the increasing demand recorded everywhere. The most important thing is to maintain the presence of these fabrics in Brazilian fashions. For the moment this is more or less assured.

FRED SCHLATTER.

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and there are some of the shadowy, all-over leaf designs to be seen too. I have noticed many blurred patterns in sober prints — black on Chinese blue, black on grey — and fine penline prints in stripes, wavy checks or designs of leaves, or such familiar objects as chairs and Chinese boxes.

Primavera, a small shop in Sloane Street, has made an enviable reputation for itself as one of the few places where one can be sure of finding really well-designed contemporary furniture, things for the table and furnishing fabrics. They showed me some charming Swiss curtain material, Haroc Trill net in various shades of cream and biscuit and other admirably designed fabrics called Graphis, Tropic and Altamira, also from Switzerland.

ANN DUVEEN.

DORVILLE

Dress of eyelet embroidery on British cotton fabric embroidered in Switzerland.

