

Paris : the city of elegance

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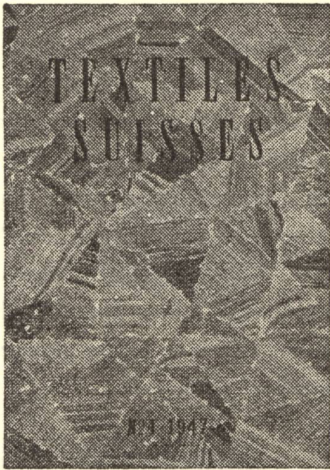
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PARIS

the City of Elegance

by Maryse Demour

Paris — the magic name — brings a sparkle to wistful eyes, an indefinable desire for the joy of life. Gay Parée! Paris with its age-old charm born of beautiful things, Paris unique in all the world.

During the occupation, the Nazi invaders believed that they could bend the Parisian spirit to their will. But Paris and the Parisians remained unconquered, ever at bay, a wild beast growling and showing its claws, untamed.

When at last the Day of Liberation dawned, Paris smiled again and its spirit went wandering down the corridor of years, seeking that essential charm it had possessed in pre-war days.

The very air one breathes in Paris, makes women desire to be beautiful and men wish to praise that beauty. And Parisian thoughts turned once again to Parisian fashions.

Utility garments — how Paris suffered from the obligation imposed by war conditions! And now, at last, like a rose-garden Paris is blooming, spread-

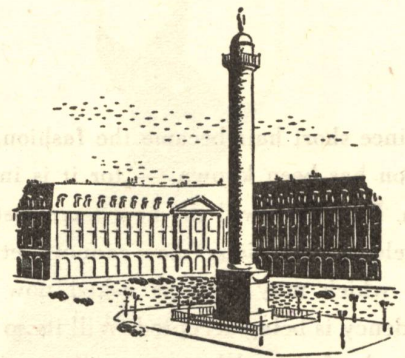
ing her delicate flowers of fashion to the warmth of a renescent sun.

The creations of this renewed spirit have left breathless those who thought that the days of Paris, as the Capital of Fashion, were numbered.

To the fashion designers have at last returned the lovely silks, the cosy woollens, the pure cottons, the rich laces and embroideries of pre-war days... and again bold fantasy and creative imagination have been placed at the service of beauty.

Parisian designers reversed the fashion trends, and American film models are already outmoded, out-classed. Parisian fashions reign, supreme. No thought is given to the difficulties which may arise from this undaunted forward drive... obstacles are swept from the path of Dame Fashion who flicks her fingers at those who will not follow her.

Only in Paris is there a sense of proportion in fashion design, a spirit which can present to the world creations falling gracefully into the frame of



centuries-old tradition. In the old days, French dolls brought to the toyland of other capitals a hint of the gracious ease of Paris. The luxury trades in their turn offered novelties which Paris, never lacking in the spirit of inventiveness, proposed to a bewildered Europe.

Today, weary of tailored, mannish styles, women are turning to more feminine fashion; long skirts are again veiling the mystery of the «nether extremities» (Oh, shades of Great Grandmama!) — *Finis*, those

graceful Diana-like limbs, because Fashion demands graceful, gracious movements such as Perdita used to charm! Perhaps our menfolk, abandoned now by their woman «comrade» will take delight in this new and delicious Eve, and turn a sonnet in her praise. No time, you say? But isn't there always time for love?

And so, once more, Paris — despite hard times and the threat of things to come — has remodelled Eve and made her remember that she is the power behind this motorized world of ours.

A Revolution

Since short hair became the fashion, no such revolution has been known, — for it is indeed a revolution. How long will the new reign last? How will it develop? Questions that cannot yet be answered, but which may well be asked now that the new tendency is being accepted. Will its so sudden appearance be followed by an equally rapid decline? Or will it lay hold on our imagination, shall we submit to its sway, so that it will fit in harmoniously in the history of Fashion? Why not? For is not a revolution, however sudden and radical it may be, the outcome of evolution, the result of preceding events? It would be a mistake to say that we felt it coming, nor did the slight lengthening of skirts that preceded it give us any idea of the lengths to which it would go, nor of its amazing success. Is it not quite right that fashions should be fantastic, unexpected, illogical like women often are! Without, however, denying old traditions! Continuity is a matter of taste, — Taste, — the god of Paris, the clever conductor of an orchestra whose magic baton makes the most charming details apparent, makes contrasts less striking, makes true values clear. Rulers change and are not often alike, — Taste, — the grand immovable vizir, enforces his strict etiquette and prevents his subjects from doing anything too daring. Let no one think he could do without him!

It was Christian Dior, a newcomer in the «Haute Couture» in Paris, who was the chief actor in the peaceful upheaval of which the whole world is speaking. This gifted man, admirably prepared for the part he is playing, by travel, culture, art studies, and having acted as scene-painter and costumer in theatres and cinemas, and as fashion designer, has now introduced a new line which is likely to become *the* line of our times: sloping shoulders, high-waisted, slender, and rounded hips.

It would be wrong to say that the whole world has accepted these novelties. The first shock of surprise was followed in many cases by the annoying feeling of having become old-fashioned from one day to another without any other choice but to submit or to take up the gauntlet and to win the day. In countries where the business interests know how to affect public opinion, there were protests of all kinds, — democratic, popular, or even national. A little later the opponents of the new line completely turned about face and became its most ardent upholders, so far as to overstep all reasonable boundaries. So much both for enemies and not-so-clever friends! The revolution has triumphed, — we now await its further development, the variations of the new idea which those who are working in the Temple of Taste in Paris, will present to us.

Celia.