

Perpetual renewal

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Perpetual Renewal

New York is the most dynamic of cities. Constantly renewed, because constantly growing. Look at Rockefeller Center! Within a few months a gigantic tower was added to this cluster of sky-scrapers. Look at Fifth Avenue! The last Victorian magnates' early XXth century «palaces» are swiftly disappearing and in their stead rise the huge shiny façades of big stores or commercial buildings.

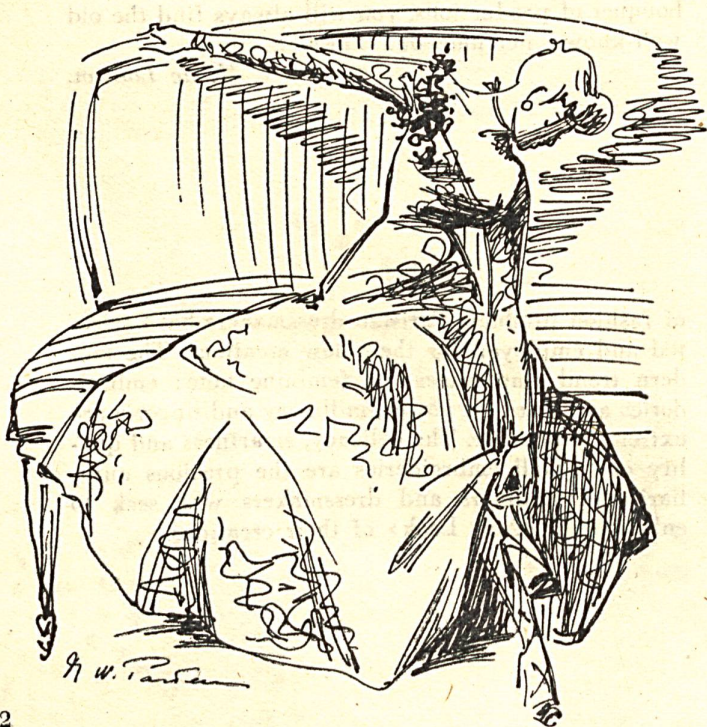
Concurrent to the destruction of the traces of Victorian New York, a strange phenomenon is happening: 1948 American women are resolutely turning their backs on the architectural simplifications of our day and adopting the sinuous, purely Victorian line for their clothing — if you please! Whence and why this anachronism? — Who knows? Whatever the reason, the well-dressed New York woman today glides along in front of atomic age buildings clad very much as her grandmother was in the old buggy days.

In our times of abstract art, womankind is pleased to complicate her toilet, just as if there was still time for details. Is this an unconscious turn-about-face? A prelude to an era of exquisite refinement, of leisurely days? It is certainly an excellent presage which we should accept with the same pleasure as we accept the heralds of spring.

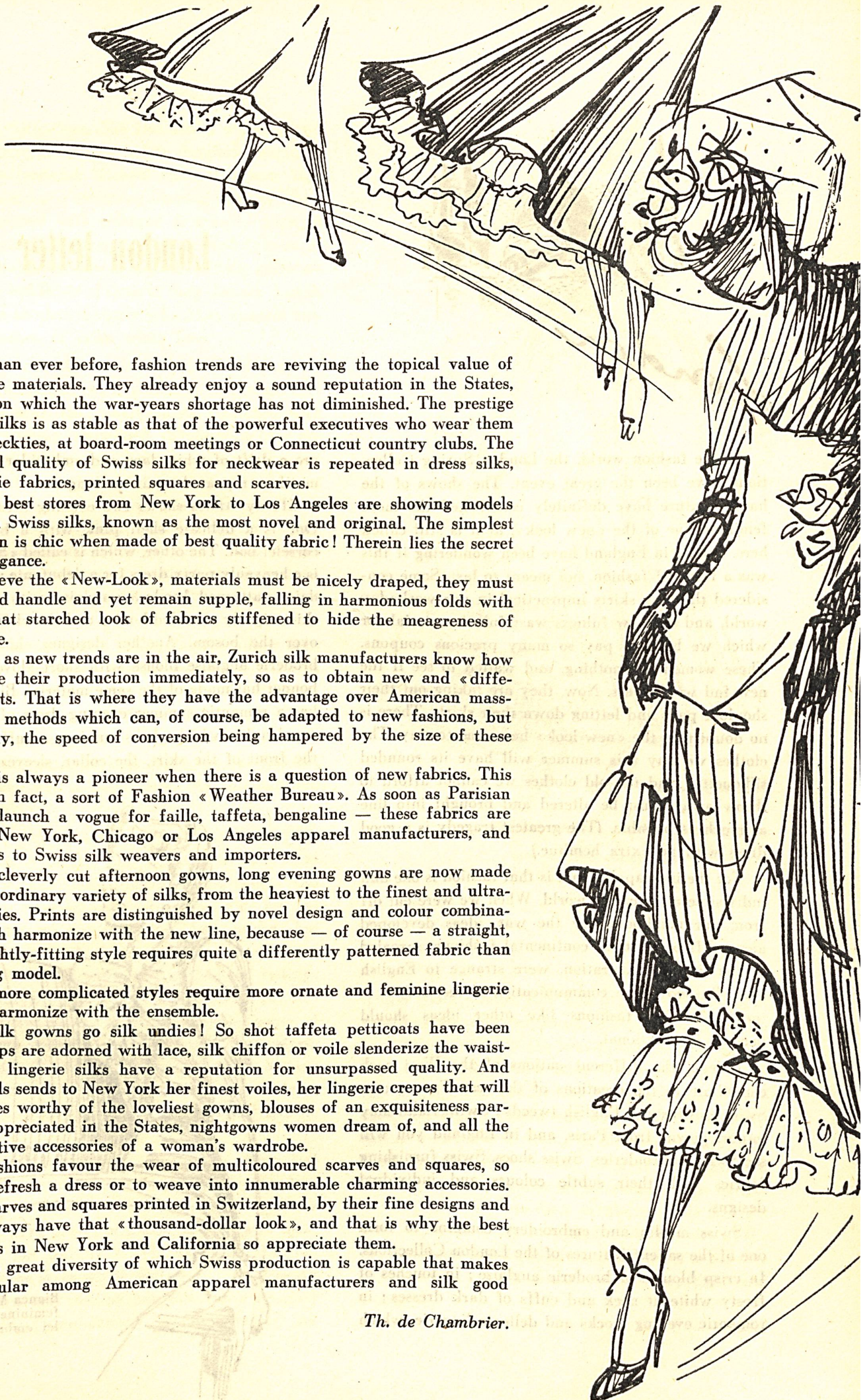
So here we are in a period of renewal! Fashion has abandoned the somewhat masculine austerity of slacks, severe tailormades and shirt blouses and is conferring upon women an allure as undulating, as seductive and as «die-away» as that of the heroines of Proust, long before two World Wars were ever thought of.

This renewal in feminine fashions signifies above all a considerable boom in textiles. Fabrics must be more varied, finer, more sumptuous: trimmings, embroideries, brocades, lamés, satins, taffetas, heavy silks, are required as a substitute for the monotonous rayon crepes which, unrivalled, predominated fashion so long — ever since 1940, in fact!

The new trends also mean the triumph of natural fibres: silk, cotton, wool, linen have regained their former pride of place, aristocrats of textiles. Their intrinsic qualities ensure that superiority Parisian haute couture demands for its models.



A new dress in black lace on a rayon taffeta.



More than ever before, fashion trends are reviving the topical value of Swiss-made materials. They already enjoy a sound reputation in the States, a reputation which the war-years shortage has not diminished. The prestige of Zurich silks is as stable as that of the powerful executives who wear them in sober neckties, at board-room meetings or Connecticut country clubs. The exceptional quality of Swiss silks for neckwear is repeated in dress silks, fine lingerie fabrics, printed squares and scarves.

All the best stores from New York to Los Angeles are showing models made from Swiss silks, known as the most novel and original. The simplest styled gown is chic when made of best quality fabric! Therein lies the secret of true elegance.

To achieve the «New-Look», materials must be nicely draped, they must have a good handle and yet remain supple, falling in harmonious folds with none of that starched look of fabrics stiffened to hide the meagreness of their weave.

As soon as new trends are in the air, Zurich silk manufacturers know how to orientate their production immediately, so as to obtain new and «different» effects. That is where they have the advantage over American mass-production methods which can, of course, be adapted to new fashions, but more slowly, the speed of conversion being hampered by the size of these huge mills.

Zurich is always a pioneer when there is a question of new fabrics. This centre is, in fact, a sort of Fashion «Weather Bureau». As soon as Parisian couturiers launch a vogue for faille, taffeta, bengaline — these fabrics are ready for New York, Chicago or Los Angeles apparel manufacturers, and this, thanks to Swiss silk weavers and importers.

Smart, cleverly cut afternoon gowns, long evening gowns are now made in an extraordinary variety of silks, from the heaviest to the finest and ultra-thin qualities. Prints are distinguished by novel design and colour combinations, which harmonize with the new line, because — of course — a straight, narrow, tightly-fitting style requires quite a differently patterned fabric than a full, long model.

Fuller, more complicated styles require more ornate and feminine lingerie that will harmonize with the ensemble.

With silk gowns go silk undies! So shot taffeta petticoats have been revived, slips are adorned with lace, silk chiffon or voile slenderize the waistline. Swiss lingerie silks have a reputation for unsurpassed quality. And Switzerland sends to New York her finest voiles, her lingerie crepes that will make undies worthy of the loveliest gowns, blouses of an exquisiteness particularly appreciated in the States, nightgowns women dream of, and all the most seductive accessories of a woman's wardrobe.

New fashions favour the wear of multicoloured scarves and squares, so useful to refresh a dress or to weave into innumerable charming accessories. Novelty scarves and squares printed in Switzerland, by their fine designs and colours always have that «thousand-dollar look», and that is why the best dressmakers in New York and California so appreciate them.

It is the great diversity of which Swiss production is capable that makes it so popular among American apparel manufacturers and silk good retailers.

Th. de Chambrier.