

Letter from London

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London

LETTER FROM LONDON

With the coming of sunny weather, and the first brave show of blossoms and tulips in the parks, our thoughts are turning to the pleasures of summer and to the clothes we are to wear.

The important fashion trend this summer is the reappearance of cotton (which for so long has been banished to the nursery) in London life. This is, under the circumstances, a most fortunate event, for our wardrobes are limited by coupons; it is a blessing to be able to wear cottons, which will wash and wash. Everywhere, Swiss fabrics and laces make headline news, from sheerest organdie and voile to crisp piqué and cotton corduroy. They are dyed in lovely, subtle colours, printed in every kind of design, from prim polka-dots to sophisticated patterns for afternoon dresses. Matilda Etches, the well-known stage designer who has now opened a couture house, showed a whole collection in cotton: beach wear, «little» summer dresses, and suits with cotton laces blouses to match.

Several of the designers are showing evening dresses of striped cotton: but most popular of all, particularly for young girls, are the Swiss lace and muslin dresses we noticed in the Spring collections. The freshness, the simplicity and the sheer daintiness of these models are irresistible. Older women, who had forgotten how charming the white muslin frocks of their own youth could be, love to see their grand-daughters wearing them again. The Duchess of Hamilton's grand-daughter, Miss Vera Mackintosh, who went to St. Moritz for the Olympic Games last Winter, has had a ravishing dress of embroidered yellow Swiss organdie made by Lil Aldin. One debutante wore to the Silver Wedding Court Ball, a floating, full-skirted dress of embroidered white Swiss organdie which was designed by Michael Sherard; another delicious dress, from Angèle Delanghe's collection is made entirely of white broderie anglaise, falling in a double-tiered skirt from a tiny waist belted with black patent leather. This will look divine at summer dances; so will Hardy Amies' beautiful ball dress of daisy-patterned Swiss lace with demurely knotted fichu and an under-skirt of mousseline de soie. Another dress Michael Sherard has designed in Swiss material, more sophisticated, is made of black organdie with a white lace pattern...

There is the Chelsea Flower Show, a great occasion at which the women visitors are only less beautiful than the banks of blossoms between which they move. The programme-sellers at the show will be four society girls, each representing one of the four seasons of the year; and for one of these Bianca Mosca has designed a lovely dress of white corrugal nylon, trimmed with Swiss lace.

This summer, hats to wear with our pretty, feminine dresses are as charming as they have ever been. There are more straws about than there were last year — some of them from Switzerland; and they are made up into flower-laden canotiers, rose-tipped bonnets, and little Renoir shapes trimmed with velvet and blossoms. Erik has shown an especially charming collection: we liked particularly his little flat-crowned hat of burnt straw, trimmed with bunches of black cherries and a drift of fine black veiling.

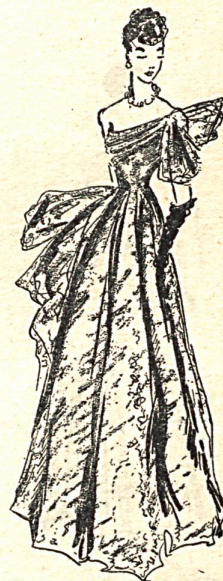
This year, in addition to the usual functions, like Ascot, the Flower Show, the cricket at Lords, we are looking forward to several exceptional and exciting affairs.

At Henley, again, women will wear their prettiest summer dresses: not only voiles and cottons, but also the lovely, stiffer rayon fabrics which are just as chic — and many of which come from Switzerland, too. Some women prefer to wear, at these sportive functions, light-weight suits of tie-silk, heavy



RHAVIS

Blouse of eyelet embroidery with bonnet and short gloves to match



MICHAEL SHERARD

Evening dress of black organdie with printed white lace pattern

rayon or checked cotton; and the blouses which go with them are very important this summer. Swiss Lace, once more, is the favourite fabric. You see blouses of embroidered organdie; ingenuous tucked muslins; blouses made entirely of cotton lace; and fine lawn blouses with edging or insertions of Swiss lace.

One of the prettiest accessories of the new fashion is the Edwardian revival in lingerie — the rustle of silk beneath a full skirt, or a whirl of white embroidery accidentally revealed. Women are wearing waist petticoats and camisoles again: the petticoats sometimes of poul and rayon taffeta; sometimes of white lawn with lace frills and insertion. Yet another pretty revival is that of white cotton nightgowns reminiscent of our mothers' youth: very «jeune fille», with long sleeves and high necks, and decorated with pin-tucking and insertions of lace or embroidery.

So much for fashions and events inside England. But what to the English, is most exciting of all is that, from May 1st, the ban on foreign travel is lifted. Once more eager English tourists are pouring into the travel agencies to book tickets for the continent, and Switzerland in particular, a favourite holiday land.

And since the war, it has become more than ever the happy land to which they long to be transported — even though they are sadly embarrassed by having so little money to spend when they get there.

Ann Duveen.



LEBELSON

Dress of St-Gall fabric and embroidery



A Fred Schlatter model in Swiss fabric

SWISS TEXTILES IN THE TROPICS

Brazilian Fashions. Brazil does not create fashions. The most fashionable centres in the country, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, are swayed by Paris and all that Paris can offer in the way of gracious elegance and distinction. North-American styling also exercises a considerable influence on the models presented by leading fashion houses. It is Buenos-Aires which has succeeded in taking the lead in South America as regards the fashion trades and, especially, in the creative adaptation of current trends; this city can today claim to be the designer of South American fashions.

First Rio and, later, her rival Sao Paulo, attempted at one time to strike out as dictators of fashion and to produce styles as gracefully nonchalant as those which proceed from other countries, but the indolence which pervades the air of tropical climes is not conducive to such an attempt. The question of native labour also raises problems which are usually almost insoluble and it is therefore easy to understand why the Argentine should predominate in South American fashion; this country is, besides, more directly under the influence of Europe.

Fashion trends in Brazil therefore have a very particular aspect. Although there are many couture houses, none are really outstanding, at least according to European standards, and very few create their own models. Most of the gowns presented are imported; when a model comes from Paris, it is always preferred to all others, and can command prices such as no other could obtain.

The influence of Swiss fabrics. As regards dress materials, Swiss fabrics are enjoying uncontested success, and their prestige is a tribute to Swiss manufacturers. They are being more and more widely adopted, for their quality corresponds exactly to the exigencies of a climate where tropical heat does not make the dressmaker's work any easier. For this winter season — which opens in April — we noted several styles. Designers unhesitatingly allow Swiss fabrics to predominate and, with them, have created models for which no other materials would be suitable.

In hot climates, Swiss silks, organdies and embroideries, enchant the feminine heart. What centre could offer, better than St. Gall, the deliciously crisp yet resistant embroideries so much in demand on a market where white is preferred above all other colours. Swiss fabrics have all the qualities tropical climates require.

The results of our investigations, which have led us to large stores and small shops, to wholesalers and retailers, and even to the Brazilian woman herself, allow us to assert that Swiss fabrics — and indeed all that comes from the lovely land of Switzerland — are highly praised in South America.

From an article by *Fred Schlatter.*