

London letter

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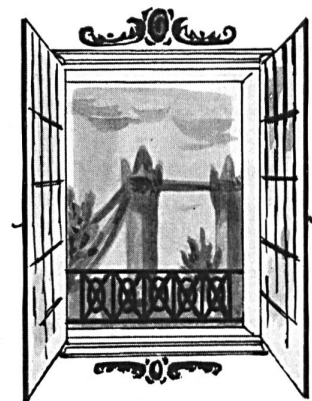
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London Letter



Mr. Alfred Renou, managing director of Buser & Co. Ltd., with five of the mannequins wearing Swiss knitted garments shown to the press at the «Swyzerli» reception.

Photo : Pierre-V. Manevy, Beckenham

At each change of season, we tend to marvel at Nature and the ways in which she helps or protects her many and varied wards. For us poor humans, who — unlike certain animals — cannot shed or grow warm protective coats, the situation is far more complicated. So by a simple process of reasoning, our ancestors decided once and for all that our seasonal needs should be governed by our respective genders — hence all edicts of feminine apparel are issued from Paris, whilst all those appertaining to the higher forms of males (human of course) emanate from London. This remarkably ingenious procedure has been operating most satisfactorily for a considerable time, tempered by the influence of such lesser centres as New York, Rome and Florence. A deep mesmeric trance invariably descends on all women some few weeks before the seasonal Paris commandments are issued and then

scores of harassed and jostled female scribes rush around Paris toiling to relay the season's instructions to millions of avid readers. So, during the ensuing few weeks, millions of women flock to buy dresses, coats, suits, etc. that find their fashioning in the Paris pronouncements of the previous season! The better wholesale couture manufacturers are, of course, able to present their own interpretations within a much shorter period.

We in London can therefore expect this season to see dresses by the thousand with long torsos and dropped waistlines, adaptations and transformations of the « Caftan » or Oriental looks — and for cooler hours, snug waisted coatees or boleros ; in a few privileged and fortunate instances we shall see slightly moulded torsos, raised waistlines and coatees or caracos hanging loosely over the bust rather like a bed jacket.

In my last letter I announced a fashion show which was to be presented early in December but too late for review in the previous issue of « Textiles Suisses ». As a number of fashion parades have been presented during the last few months featuring various overseas creations — Swedish, Dutch, etc., it was good to see a well-known importer seize the opportunity of presenting examples of the finer Swiss creations.

But this show was vastly different in that all the garments shown were exclusively knitwear and — even more notable — the production had been completely sold out, so that the major retailers throughout the country were to have their waiting orders « rationed out ». Success may bring its problems and difficulties but it is encouraging to see that quality and good taste are still extensively appreciated in spite of the modern mediocrity resulting from mass-production for insatiable and unselective markets.

However this particular fashion show has caused a minor disturbance and has set the trade talking. For years we in England have used the word « knitwear » in a very general sense — covering anything produced on needles. Gradually the terms « jersey » and « jerseywear » have extended beyond their original meaning and have now become synonymous with knitwear. When it was empha-



REICHENBACH & Co., SAINT-GALL
 White embroidered blue organdy
 Model by : Christian Dior Ltd., London

Photo : Keystone, London

sised at this fashion show that all the garments were « knitwear » as opposed to « jerseywear », some confusion was bound to arise and so set the trade talking as to the difference between the two ! However, we were informed that « double-knit » was distinctive in that it made garments shape-keeping and eliminated all tendencies to « bagginess » and « sitting-out » sags.

This last feature is such an important selling point that it is not surprising manufacturers and retailers stress the difference, although people in the trade themselves are not entirely agreed as to the precise meaning of these two terms. However the show was unquestionably a great success and leads one to hope that some day Swiss clothing manufacturers will present a joint exhibition in London, to which the public would also be admitted.

Bond Street, which makes its way narrowly from Oxford Street to Piccadilly, was at one time famed as the most fashionable thoroughfare in Europe and maybe of the world ; and even today it still retains much of its dignity.



REICHENBACH & Co., SAINT-GALL
 White embroidered batiste
 Model by : Christian Dior Ltd., London

Photo : Keystone, London



RUTI SILK Co., ZURICH

A woven check in feather-weight rayon
 Model by: Susan Small, London

Photo: David Olins, London

bands in contrasting tones. Sleeveless, with a rounded neckline and a full skirt, the general effect gave a youthful and lively line. By way of contrast, a « tailored » ensemble consisting of a striped double-knit jacket and skirt gave a feeling of elegance even on the hanger. The skirt was straight, the main interest being in the box jacket which fitted loosely to the base of the hips.

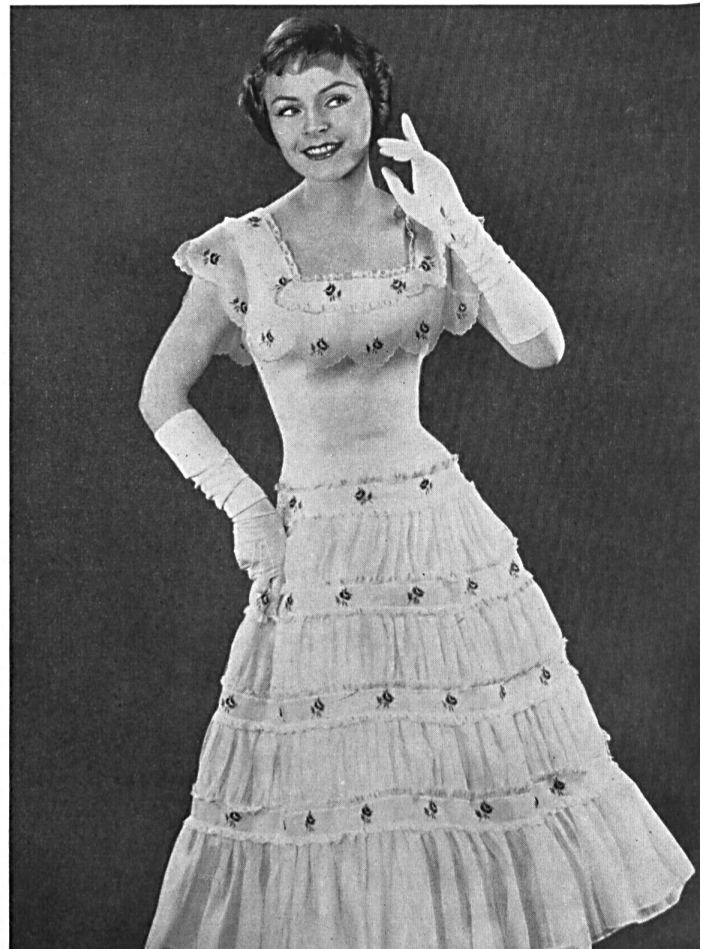
During the last few days I have noticed a great selection of Swiss blouses, or blouses made from Swiss fabrics and lace, in the London stores, all the prices being within the reach of most women so that they should prove to be good sellers for the coming summer.

But the most remarkable developments in the fashion trade are occurring in the knitwear sections. As one buyer said to me, « Before the war, women bought afternoon dresses in crepe wool, now all they want is knitwear, knitwear and knitwear »... or should it be jerseywear ?

Ruth Fonteyn

It was at the end of 1906 that the White House was opened and rapidly gained a reputation for unsurpassed quality. In 1923 an amalgamation took place between the White House of Bond Street and L. Giraud of the Rue de Castiglione, Paris. In spite of the very different conditions of today, the White House still enjoys a respected name — unequalled for excellence.

Each of the four main departments was able to show me Swiss-made products. In the linen department, I saw bedspreads — or blanket covers — in quilted and embroidered muslin ; in the underwear department, nylon nightgowns with lace insets and pleated skirts ; men's and women's handkerchiefs exquisitely embroidered on fine lawn, or linen and lawn, or on linen and cotton. The outerwear department was awaiting deliveries for the new season but managed to show me some interesting early arrivals. The first of these was a dress cut on the Princess line with a large check design effected by set-in



UNION S.A., SAINT-GALL

Rosebud embroidered organdy
 Model by: Nettie Vogues Ltd., London

Photo: Georges Miles, London