

London letter

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss textiles [English edition]**

Band (Jahr): - **(1956)**

Heft 2

PDF erstellt am: **29.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798592>

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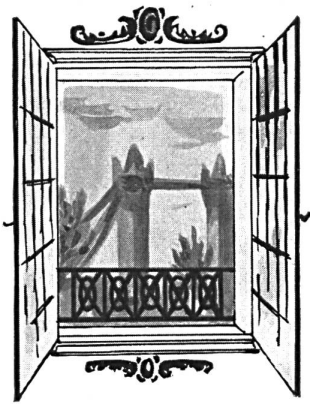
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London Letter

L. ABRAHAM & Co., SILKS Ltd., ZURICH

Rayon and wool mixture.

Model by Roter Models Ltd., London.

Photo John French



Fashion without colour is as inconceivable to the Londoner as London would be without its parks and just at this very time of year (mid-June) these are unquestionably at their very loveliest. The city-dwellers who are obliged to spend their daily lives in the fantastic scramble of the world's largest city, love to snatch moments of relaxation in the many parks and squares and to admire the beautifully tended flower beds, changed as each new species comes into bloom.

Such beauty is a challenge to Woman, it stimulates in her the desire to equal — if not to surpass — the wonderful and subtle tones of Summer ; and so on any fine Sunday morning in Hyde Park an impromptu fashion parade takes place, in which every fashionable woman vies with every other one. If individual looks are sometimes critical, amused or even withering, the whole general scene of green lawns, trees, flower beds against the constantly changing pageantry of women's colourful dresses is a delight to

watch. Of course not all women can take part in this unofficial fashion parade or contest, so that in a very few moments one can assess the effects on the average woman of the dictates of the great masters. And just at this time of year when fashion reporters and writers are swamped with overlapping invitations — from early morning to late evening — to see the Autumn Collections, it is very sobering to watch the results of our various admonishings over the past few months. Financial considerations and personal tastes, of course, produce their effect so that, as I sit in my park deck chair, I can see a passing medley of rich toned cottons, nylons and rayons, more subdued silks and a few linens; styles that are either high, low, normal waisted or not waisted at all, skirts that are straight or permanently pleated, voluminous with stiffened underskirts; Caftans that nip gently into the waist or three-quarter length coats straight from shoulder to hem tip — or again boleros that just about cover the shoulders. In fact, in the words of an old popular song « Anything Goes ».

Again one can see that the British fashion market is dividing itself into two main age groups :

a) « The Teen-Agers » — a term which we now use generally to cover the ages from 17, when most girls leave

school, — to 25, by which age most young women of today are married.

b) The women over 35, who are now freed from some of their earlier married responsibilities (bringing up a young family) and whose husbands now occupy better positions; furthermore, by this time a fair proportion of such women have learnt to appreciate the better qualities and values.

From the general trading point of view the major market is now concentrated in the « Teen-Age Group »; it has the highest buying power and what is even more important this is the Age Group that *wants* to spend its money. Being usually without responsibilities a young woman's interests revolve around clothes; through the various magazines which she reads avidly, she learns to accept the maxim that clothes are one of the good things of life and her birthright. In her choice she is definite; if she likes a garment she is likely to buy it, irrespective of the shops in which she sees it, as she is far less class conscious of shops than her mother was. Obviously the lure and pleasure of fashion return to a woman when she can only relax from the « ties » of growing children but instead of influencing her teen-age daughter she now tends to reflect the decisive opinions and likes of her daughter. The days of a « mum's print dress » are finally over; the more



**FORSTER WILLI & Co.,
SAINT-GALL**

*Fine guipure trimming.
Blouse by Janet Colton Ltd,
London.*

Photo Roy Round

sombre prints and designs which until recently were regarded as «right for mum» are now unsaleable. There is no reason why colour and interesting designs should be the prerogatives of youth; in fact with the experience of a few additional years a woman can learn to appreciate quality and good design, furthermore she can find out how to apply these to herself. The Englishwoman is now no longer afraid of colour and good styling is far more widely appreciated.

Numerically the «Over 30s» form the larger of the two main age-group market divisions so it may be that the potentialities have not yet been sufficiently tested. The greater part of Swiss Knitwear (outerwear as well as underwear and lingerie) imported into this Country appeals primarily to the «Over 35s» — the reasons are firstly because of clean, neat styling, well finished even to the minor details; secondly, because of the attention given to the designing which apparently remains unspoiled by financial cuttings or slashings of production costings. In short, Swiss made-up garments will invariably find their best and steadiest market in the quality ranges.

No major British Store or leading individual shop that prides itself on quality can now afford to ignore the demand for Swiss productions. The present day opportunities for much greater foreign travelling are naturally contributing to the appreciation of good design and quality. Perhaps partially because of this, Messrs. Woodlands of Knightsbridge recently hit on the intriguing and clever idea of an International Boutique where Switzerland was represented by an enchanting selection of draped dresses and matching coats produced by Marty & Cie. The other Knightsbridge Store that invariably offers a wide range of Swiss-made garments is, of course, Harrods. An outstanding model recently in the knitted suit department was in ottoman knit, the jacket of which was collarless, well-cut for a good body fit, the skirt straight with just a kick-pleat at the back. Cotton dresses or separates from abroad are not usually so well represented because of the obviously higher retail price but an altogether delightful style displayed in the salon consisted of a top, sleeveless and square-necked with green and white vertical stripes dotted with black stars; the full skirt was happy and carefree in its blending of vertical and horizontal stripings.

Silk garments on the other hand have enjoyed popularity for many years; in the Junior Miss Department of the same Store my eyes seemed to immediately pick out an extremely attractive model, simply and effectively styled with a fitting torso with an inset black piping running down the front from the two shoulders turning away over the hips and round the small of the back. Small ruching over the shoulders and at the base of the piping over the hips gave all the softness and gentleness required; the print design on a white ground consisted of a mottled grey overtone with a spot pattern in blue, green and puce.

In another department a prominent display was given to a pair of slacks (double-knit!) tapered and full length with slits on the sides at the base of the legs. A repeat floral print knit in the fabric gave an arresting tone of

exclusiveness — a feature which, however, is invariably associated with its makers (Hanro).

So much for the present Swiss summer garments now remaining in the major shops; although it is still too early, at the time of writing, to review the ranges available for the autumn I feel I should mention one or two points of interest. At the London Office of Messrs. Gut & Co. I was shown a wide range of fabrics in silk, rayon, cotton and nylon, from plain Duchess Satins (in an unusually large selection of shades) brocades and embroidered organzas to beautifully toned lames — and even embroidered cottons, which are presumably for next summer!

Janet Colton — the young blouse firm mentioned in a recent *London Letter* and which is rapidly establishing a fine reputation, — continues to use a considerable amount of Swiss lace and guipure. The styling of the day, cocktail and evening blouses from this house is, in the main, young and sophisticated; the finish is careful and neat.

In the showrooms of one of the major importers of Swiss ready-mades I saw a number of ranges made by various well-known houses and which maintained the quality always associated with them. Wonderful for leisure evenings was a two-piece (by Egeka) consisting of tapering slacks in a Jacquard irregular spot design and



L. ABRAHAM & Co., SILKS Ltd., ZURICH

Dull black grosgrain; dark oyster satin trimming.
Model by Roter Models Ltd., London.



HEER & Co. Ltd., THALWIL

Astran Lurex fabric.

Model by Koupy, London.

the top plain knit with a large cowl collar lined and with the same spot design as the slacks.

A new name to the English market (René Waegli) introduces itself through a range of jumpers and golfer cardigans; an interesting selection of ski-wear models

produced by this same house was made on hand-knitting machines. But just at the moment it is much too warm to think about ski-wear!

Ruth Fonteyn