

Pink apple blossom and white cherry

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*Pink apple blossom
and white cherry*

I am supposing, Madam, that you stayed in Paris for the collections, that you were among the two or three hundred favoured ones who attended the big openings of the couturiers, that you saw some hundreds of dresses paraded before you, that you fell head over heels for one particular model because its line delighted you and its subtle shades went so well with your hair or your complexion. Of the multitude of impressions, the swirl of countless breathtaking creations amid the heat, the hustle and bustle, the noise, and the haze of cigarette smoke, one

P Bauer

En bas — Christian Dior : ensemble robe, chapeau, gants en organza satin imprimé.
En haut, de gauche à droite — Jacques Fath : mousseline rose, corsage bouillonné; Jean Patou : mousseline imprimée avec drapé au dos; Jeanne Lanvin-Castillo : mousseline ficelle à pois blancs.

general idea remains — your own impression of the new fashion. You may like it or criticise it, but you are obliged to adopt it, for it has been dictated by the great couturiers.

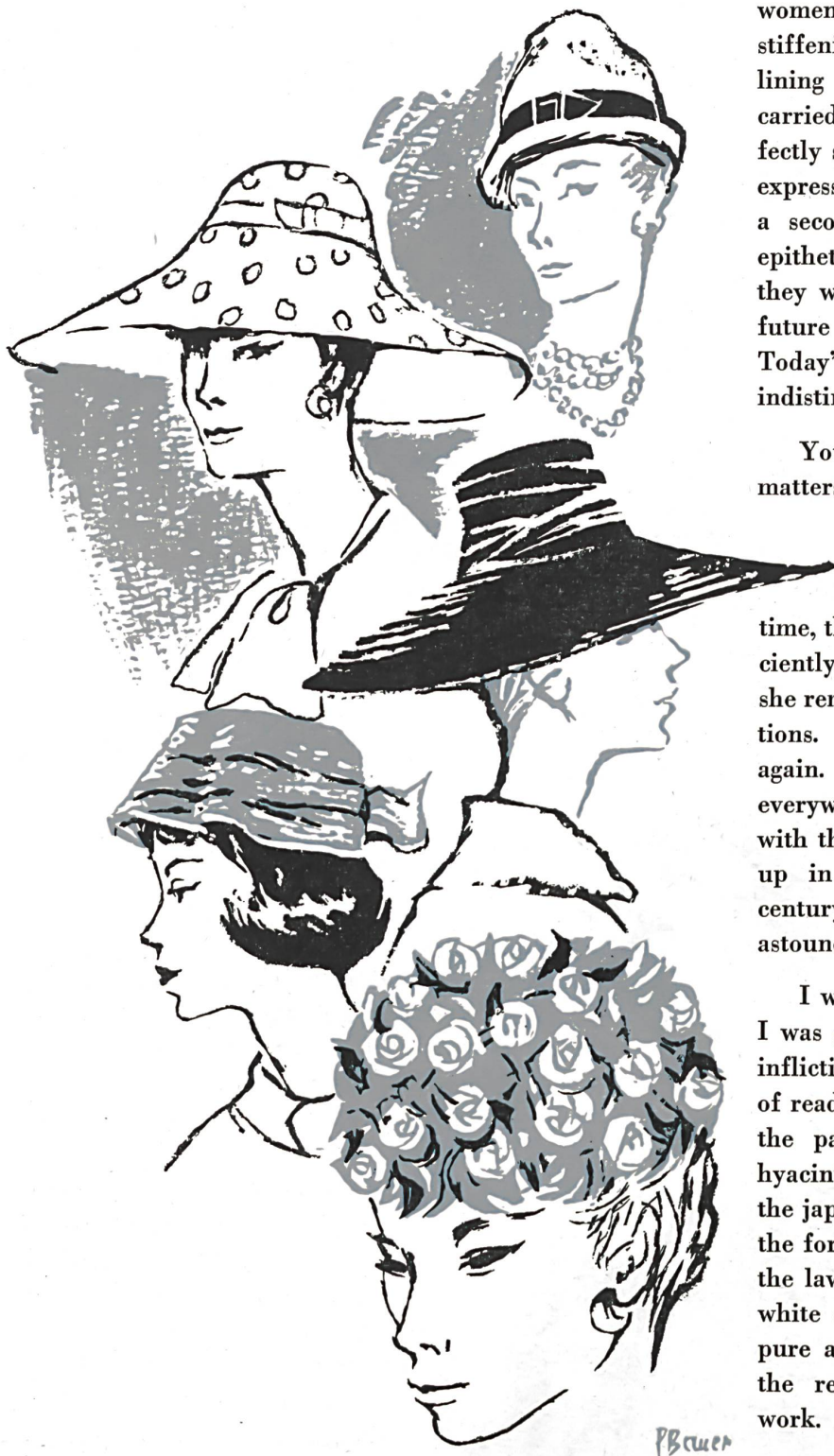
And yet if you tried to describe the fashion, to sum it up in a few pages, I imagine you would be hard put to do so. That is why you must allow me to pity the poor fashion writers who, twice a year, have to reject what they have previously praised and try to persuade the public how much nicer the new dresses are than the old. Add to this the fact that there is very keen rivalry between the fashion magazines, as in all journalism moreover. At all costs new titles have to be thought up, new ideas and high sounding

adjectives. When Dior started sculpturing on women, by means of skilful padding and stiffening — particularly in lingerie and lining — the vocabulary of statuary, even carried to the point of exaggeration, was perfectly suitable. Lyricism is the usual mode of expression in this field. The designer became a second Pygmalion. Yes, but... the same epithets no longer apply to this spring's models; they will have to be filed away carefully for future reference, perhaps in a few years' time. Today's fashion marks a return to soft, hazy, indistinct outlines.

You may remember, Madam, because these matters interest you, that the great Coco Chanel made a come-back a few years ago. Her first collection met with very little real success. Many thought, at the time, that Chanel had not been able to get sufficiently away from her brilliant past, and that she remained too much her old self in her creations. Suddenly, the Chanel style is popular again. Not merely at the rue Cambon but everywhere. Even if one has been familiar with the trade for a very long time and mixed up in its little secrets for nearly half a century, one still cannot help being amazed, astounded.

I was thinking of this just this morning as I was going the rounds of my garden, before inflicting on you, Madam, the dubious pleasure of reading this article. Since yesterday, under the pale rays of the late winter sun, the hyacinths have pushed up their green sheaths, the japonica has opened its soft pink blossoms, the forsythia has become one mass of gold and the lawns have been studded with a carpet of white daisies. A new Spring has been born, pure and moving in its pristine freshness — the result of a few months' underground work.

It is the same with fashion. You are still wearing your winter dresses and coats with



De haut en bas — Jacques Fath : forme haute cabossée, bord relevé ; Svend-Jacques Heim : grande forme à pois ; Gilbert Orcel (Madeleine de Rauch) ; Achille (Carven) : toque paille ; Pierre Balmain : toque de roses.

their classical lines, which already seem a little drab to you, and, all of a sudden, the spring dresses, like the buds of yesterday, have burst onto the scene. You hardly know them, and yet already you are growing to love them...

Meanwhile the fashion writers have been hard at it finding new images, new words.

In actual fact, their task is much simpler this time. This vague, soft, amorphous flood of light fabrics, this effervescence of mousselines, this fluidity, conjure up visions of bubbling springs, Italianate gardens with fountains and groups of muses, nymphs or Graces. These fabrics with their large floral designs, this riot of colour, mark the close association of women with horticulture, so much so in fact that at one fashion parade I thought for a moment that I was back at Ghent in that fantastic hall where, every five years, the unforgettable «Floralties» are held.

In this connection, if you were in Paris recently, Madam, I hope that you found time to visit the dream garden in the basement of the Grand Palais of Household Arts, with its brilliant splashes of colour reminiscent of Van Gogh, the azaleas crowding against the cinerarias, the hyacinths against the tulips, the primroses against the lilies of the valley. It was a sumptuous spring parade.

Even if you do not appreciate all the new fashions, fair reader, you know that among the wide variety of styles and the veritable rainbow of colours, you are bound to find something that will delight you.

Perhaps you will criticise the suits for being a little soft and a trifle difficult to wear. But they have a certain air of abandon and can be worn loose-fitting over an infinite variety of blouses that are all so soft and youthful with their floral designs! And then too big collars are always becoming.

You will say that the dresses appear very simple, often too simple for your taste. But... few things are as difficult to make as the deceptively simple little dress which, on the hanger, looks soft and shapeless but which, once put on, takes on life and moulds itself to your movements and the inflexions of your body.

But apart from these minor criticisms of details, which are an instinctive reaction against the unusual, there is everything to rave about. To quote at random: the diversity of the skirts; straight, pleated, full, billowing, bell shaped, sometimes with panels, often uneven — skirts for all tastes and all shapes. Let us add that as a general rule they are a little shorter than last season.



Détails, de haut en bas — Carven: deux-pièces Prince de Galles avec écharpe de même tissu ; Jacques Heim : deux-pièces en lainage beige ; Christian Dior : robe du soir en crêpe, demi longueur, fendue et retenue par un bijou aux genoux, écharpe de même tissu ; Guy Laroche : robe bulle en mousseline imprimée retenue devant ; Christian Dior : robe de cocktail.

The big news this season is the collars of suits, dresses and blouses. You'll find everything imaginable in the way of collars at the couturiers! You have only to choose the one that flatters your neck and shoulders.

Fabrics? Above all they are soft, whether in wool, silk, cotton or any other fabric you care to name. In any case, mousseline is used by all the couturiers as well as organdies, laces and guipures.

Colours? A great deal of navy blue, as every spring, but also a whole range of blues and yellows. There are dozens of dotted models too. Dots are all the rage this season.

A detail in passing: the enormous buttons introduced some time ago by Jacques Fath are back again, made of course in new materials and particularly in mother of pearl.

The top designers are practically the same. A few well-known names disappear but new ones come to take their place. The youngest of them all is Guy Laroche, ex-designer at Jean Dessès. Near the Rond-Point des Champs-Élysées, over the Gastinne-Renette gunsmith's shop, he presented a very attractive, youthful collection.

Hats are full of surprises, as new hats always are! What is particularly astonishing however is that they are less feminine than the fashion, which could not be more so; it must be intentional.

Shoes are fine, slender, tapering. Bright and colourful imitation jewellery adds a gay note to dresses. Posies of flowers or single flowers on a long stem brighten suits.

Everything is youthful, neat, dainty as a Paris sky in May. I wish you, Madam, a joyous spring in your new spring outfit.

Gala

Détails ; de haut en bas — Christian Dior : caban noir ; Pierre Balmain : robe de lainage noir avec boutons ; Jacques Fath : blouse drapée en mousseline blanche à pois. (De droite à gauche) Jeanne Lanvin-Castillo : ensemble de lainage à veste décollée dans le dos et robe à corselet ; Madeleine de Rauch ; deux-pièces en lainage et jersey beiges.

