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Indian Summer 1948

There is perfect harmony this year between Dame Nature's pallet and the tones and colourings selected by American fashion designers. All the tints of autumn forests are represented in the collections, in smart fashion houses and stores, social gatherings, salons, in clubs and cosmopolitan restaurants. The women's gowns are subtly graded through the whole scale of warm and flattering tones, from dark brown to light beige, ranging through rusts, coppers, golds and purples which make the glory of an Indian Summer.

Indian Summer is a phenomenon peculiar to America, a sort of St. Martin's Summer such as we have it in Europe, but which, instead of shedding its warmth for an all too short period, lingers on sometimes until Christmas, bringing warm sunny days and a splendour of colourful foliage, carrying the autumn season far beyond the date prescribed by the calendar.

This slow transition from summer into winter favours the preparation and presentation of spring models. It is also a source of inspiration for American model houses: Indian Summer prolongs the joys of open-air life; clement skies encourage the promotion of sales of piece goods, clothes for the next summer season. No one loiters long over the winter wardrobe, for cold weather lasts but some three months.

And so in New York, November and December bring the pleasure of admiring summer fashions and the first models intended for the approbation of smart crowds in Florida, California and Arizona holiday centres.

Natural fibres are coming into their own again everywhere — in the winter, spring and summer 1949 collections they represent the acme of elegance. The prestige of natural silks, American cottons, pure wools, natural linens, is sustained and stressed in the smartest collections. It is because the American woman is demanding quality more and more for her dress fabrics. She knows that real, distinctive smartness depends much on the materials used by the weaver. Confronted with such competition, synthetic fibres too, are being perfected to satisfy buyers

who are becoming increasingly exacting and have but the perplexity of choice from among the immense variety of American textile products and the fabrics imported from Europe.

Among the most outstanding novelties noted for their high-grade quality, Swiss speciality products hold a place of honour in the apparel trades, as well as in the piece goods departments of the best stores.

Delicate St. Gall fabrics are always favourites for teenagers' ball dresses, as well as for their older sisters; they make the loveliest christening robes, graduating and bridal gowns, kiddies' dresses, crisp, fresh and washable blouses.

Weavers, embroiderers and textile finishers of Switzerland seem to have been plotting together to send to America, apart from organdies, white fabrics and embroideries for classical lingerie, materials suitable for wear in any of the four seasons. They are following fashion trends which have made of cotton a year-round favourite.

Colour schemes and designs of St. Gall novelties in organdie, lawn and embroidery are new and can be used for town or winter wear: shaded and uncrushable organdies, dark green and red, navy blue and pink, brown and yellow, make gowns as iridescent as taffeta, but more vaporous still; printed voiles with small classical motifs on dark ground for «little» blouses to be worn with black suits, for «little» dressy frocks to slip on under fur coats late into autumn and as early as January.

Zurich silks are, without a shadow of doubt, fabrics which are wearable on all occasions. Their reputation for beauty and quality make them a permanent feature in the collections presented by the best New York houses. They offer a remarkable range of weaves, designs and colourings, printed and plain textures.

And, because Indian Summer is a herald of spring, the first novelty ribbons from Basle and fancy straws from Aargau are already winging their way to America.

In all climates and latitudes of the vast United States, Swiss apparel and fashion specialities are always in season — somewhere!

Th. de Chambrier.