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LETTER FROM LONDON



London

At last, the rationing of clothes and materials is over, and Englishwomen can now buy what they want — in theory, anyhow. In practice, most of them are still to some extent rationed in their buying by the limitations of their purses, for the price of clothes, with purchase tax added, is still very high here. During the past years it was almost impossible to make an ever diminishing store of coupons stretch out to include sheets and furnishing fabrics as well as clothes. Now, we find ourselves looking out hopefully for Swiss textiles. Because of continuing restrictions on imports from abroad, there are not as many of these as we could wish; but the quality is so good and the designs so charming that these fabrics are well worth hunting for.

Nets and marquisettes from Switzerland do seem to be in more plentiful supply lately: we

have admired many lengths of filmy curtain fabrics, some of them plain, others flowers patterned, or worked with squares or stars.

This is the season of the year when the lovely muslins of St. Gall are most tempting. And once again young girls are going to dance at their first parties in drifting dresses of white or rose-bud organdie. Hardy Amies' evening gown of Swiss organdie is the dream dress for a débütante: he tops it with a little Second Empire jacket of green silk, and calls it « May Day ». Janet West, who uses Swiss fabrics a great deal, has several of these ingénue party dresses: we noticed one in spotted muslin with a billowing skirt and cherry-coloured ribbons. Another designer used dotted Swiss muslin for an enchanting wedding-dress with long sleeves, a gathered bodice and full skirt. The

short evening frocks which were shown in the Paris Collections have only just begun to appear in London. Most women cling to long skirts, often worn with short, flyback jackets and tiny evening hats of sequin embroidered tulle or silk. Accessories have become doubly important since the war, when women had to make their suits and dresses



Janet West's blouse of pale blue organdie with collar and cuffs of broderie anglaise

last longer and to vary them with changing accessories and clever lingerie touches. This year, there are a lot of dark cottons or linens, iced with white piqué or eyelet embroidery. Erik makes tiny hats of white broderie anglaise, with gloves to match — wonderful to wear with a navy-blue dress, for example. White blouses of broderie anglaise and blouses of pastel-coloured organdie, or crisp voile, are as popular as ever ; and they appear to great advantage under the short bolero jackets of some

of the new suits. Voile is much in vogue again. Piqué is having a great rush, too. It is used for important winged collars and cuffs on dark dresses, for little cloche hats and sometimes for gloves. And it appears in the evenings in the short jackets which have become equally chic to wear out to dinner or on the beach.

But perhaps the main fashion story this summer is the prevalence of tie-silk and other stiff silks (faille, poult, taffeta and gros-grain) for afternoon

dresses, cocktail suits and also for fitted silk coats, in black or dark blue. This kind of coat is the latest thing to wear to any of the smart functions of the London season: at Ascot, for instance, there are sure to be several. The tie-silks (for which Zurich is famous) are charming and look particularly well in London. Most of the couture houses have used this fabric for dresses and suits ; and one sees it too in the big stores. One famous shop had a really enchanting selection of spotted silk dresses and tie-silk suits, most of which were Swiss. They made a fine show, but not for long — for they sold like hot cakes.

Among the enticing things which come from Switzerland, we do not forget the fine straws for hats. Of these, again, there are not enough, but we treasure the few which do arrive.

Children as well as grown-ups are able to enjoy the delicate fabrics of St. Gall : one famous shop in Bond Street has been showing the most delicious little dresses of pastel coloured organdie, with knickers to match. Any small girl would look ravishing in one of these, which are perfect for a party or for summer « best ».

Ann Duveen.



Victor Stiebel's romantic ball dress with full skirt of lilac coloured tulle.