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SOUTH-INTO-SUMMER FASHIONS

Winter resorts fashions harbingers of Summer

Summer, in New York, begins on January 1st — at least as regards fashions. All along Fifth Avenue, window displays discard their snow and winter sports scenes and pay homage to the Tropics. Bonwitt Teller, Bergdorf Goodman, Saks Fifth Avenue, McCutcheon's, Lord & Taylor — to quote just a few of the leading fashion stores which set the pace in the shopping world — show yachting outfits, beach wear, cotton frocks for golden sands and azure blue oceans.

And this is the time of the year when every well-dressed American woman sets out to choose her Florida or California wardrobe, or plans what she will wear in the Southern States. For a few fleeting weeks, Arizona deserts blossom into flower and dude ranches near Phoenix and Tuxon, in the hot, dry climate, are becoming more and more popular for winter vacations.

And, despite its mists and sleet, it is New York which presents the most bewildering choice of summer wear. That California, with its wonderful Pacific Riviera climate, should show sparkling collections of vacation wear, is logical and understandable: every year, Hollywood styles are becoming increasingly important in the fashionable sets of the United States! But that, without leaving New York, we should be able to select the most distinctive summer attire — and this in the heart of winter — and watch for the trends likely to predominate during the next six or eight months — surely this is a unique privilege!

Among the crisp, charming novelties which tired business workers can now contemplate, is a large quantity of fine cotton models, light-weight silks, lawns or rayons, enchantingly new in effect. There is no very outstanding change in cut or general styling, but the 1950 silhouette will be rejuvenated, lightened by transparent, vaporous fabrics, which manufacturers have succeeded in making unexpectedly «new». Lingerie cuffs and collars on coloured frocks, tailormades and suits, give a neat, youthful air among the light-weight fabrics which characterize this year's early summer fashions paraded by New York stores.

Naturally, fine cotton fabrics, a Swiss speciality product, are an important item in the leading stores: plain, printed or fancy voiles, organdies, lawns, dotted Swiss, gaufered fabrics, with fancy, check or striped ground in relief. A great number of novel fabrics have come on the market: new for the younger generation, at least, for in many cases they have been suggested by old samples which delighted Grandmama's heart and eye, in a day when world wars were unknown.

And so we gaze on transparent gingham, cloqué, relief-printed and embroidered organdies, voiles with woven satin stripe, permanently pleated fabrics, Scotch plaids on light ground, or exotic chintzes with which to make full swinging summer skirts, to be worn with lawn or linen blouses. Soft furnishing fabrics with huge all-over patterns — scenery, foliage — will be popular with the teen-agers especially.

Many of these summer styles are intended for wear with blouses, tailored coats or jackets made of heavier fabrics, which are also easy to launder and iron. For example, two-piece suits combining cotton voile and nylon velvet. When she comes to Europe, the wardrobe of the 1950 «Maid of Cotton» will include a flowered chintz dress worn with a tailored coat of plain, transparent organdie.

The newest silks also occupy a place of honour in the best stores and there is a remarkable range of them, from zephyr-light silk chiffons, incomparably smart, to silk and nylon voiles and marquisesettes, shantung, and supple tafetas. Silks imported from Zurich feature in the most exclusive collections.

A mild winter has proved favourable to these early summer collections, made even more alluring by the knowledge that there is little or no snow to be had in winter sports resorts. If the snow is deserting the mountain tops, why not speed away to the Southlands, to Pacific beaches, where the Sun is a faithful friend and master?

Tb. de Chambrier.