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London Letter



This year the London collections had to be crammed into two days. In spite of this everything went well and a great many models were sold for export.

The new line is slender — suits with straight skirts and waisted jackets, wrap-around coats tapering to a narrow hem, long sheath-like dinner dresses. Only the ball gowns are still full and flowing, often with pleats gathered to a narrow waist.

All these clothes are wearable and good ; but the silhouette is obviously not revolutionary. What is most interesting is the development in fabrics, and the great diversity of the materials used. The main trend is towards reversible fabrics, in both silk and wool, and for cloqués and other materials with raised surfaces. Double-faced woollens are used for coats, the inside being of a different colour or a checked variation, serving as a lining and turning back to form collar and cuffs. Silks and rayons often present two quite different faces, and most of them have raised

surfaces. Frederick Starke uses a ribbed velvet which was made specially for him. Velvet is being used a good deal, both for sumptuous evening dresses and dark cocktail suits, and also as trimming for suits. Michael Sherard shows a beautiful crinoline ball gown of glowing amethyst velvet, and Brenner Sports have a charming afternoon dress with a velvet bodice and lattice-patterned skirt of velvet on taffeta. Lace is very popular too. Ann Ashworth has a cocktail suit, very tailored in cut, of black Chantilly lace over pink satin. The fabrics of Saint-Gall occupy their usual important place in the collections.

Hartnell shows a black velvet dress with a very narrow skirt and a bodice of pink guipure lace. The Swiss designer Mattli, whose collection was particularly good, uses black taffeta covered with *écru* lace for a pencil-slim dress with a many-tiered skirt. Hartnell's young girl's dance dress illustrated here is a white satin crinoline ornamented with *broderie anglaise*, the flower pattern being outlined in pale blue stitching, and worn over a blue satin slip. The strapless bodice is edged with blue, and there is a fitted bolero with blue collar and cuffs and a pink rose at the neck.

One of the oldest and most famous of the London shops has been showing another lovely fabric from Saint-Gall : a pastel coloured cotton organdie, printed with alternate motifs of embroidery and lace. This was used for one of the models in a dress designing competition at a leading London Art School. Indeed, nothing can shake the devotion of English girls to these filmy Swiss fabrics. One of the most outstanding *débutantes* of the season, Lady Ann Coke (the Earl of Leicester's daughter) wore for her presentation an enchanting dress of white *broderie anglaise* with a square cape collar and a posy of *marguerites* tucked in at the waist.

The new hats are very attractive : silky felts, small and hugging the head, sometimes with a touch of fur to match a fur-trimmed coat. Shoes are simple — classic court shoes are cut low to flatter instep and ankle.

In one of London's biggest shoe shops, which has branches all over England, a window is devoted entirely to Swiss shoes — elegant low-heeled pumps in different leathers, colours and designs. These are immensely popular in this country, and it is indeed a treat for us to see so many Swiss shoes in the shops again.

Ann Duveen.

HARTNELL

London

Nightgown with
broderie anglaise
motifs

