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London Letter

Pre-Coronation fever has added excitement to the mid-season dress shows here, and to the 'little season' in London. Now, more than ever before, the doings of the Queen and her family are chronicled in detail, and what the Queen wore to a function the night before makes fashion headlines in the morning news. Already, copies of the magpie black and white satin dress she wore to the Command Film Performance have appeared in the shops.

A big display of «Coronation» clothes sponsored by *Fashion and Fabrics* was given in London lately, and is now touring the provincial cities. Another important fashion show was put on at Claridges by the Haute Couture for the Queen and Princess Margaret; this is the first time that the designers have combined to give a display for a reigning monarch.

The wholesale designers have also made a big effort in their mid-season shows. At Horrockses, cotton is for ever on the up-and-up, arriving in many new disguises — shiny as silk, crisp as suiting or rustling like taffeta; and black cotton is spangled with beads and sequins for the evening. Spectator Sports are showing a lot of faille and givrine for fin-de-journée dresses; and they have a lovely cocktail suit in shot, grape-bloom Swiss matelassé. Another lovely model is a dinner dress with a rum-coloured velvet bodice, and a full skirt of dove-grey organza. There are good street clothes in this collection too, including fur-collared suits and jersey dresses. The revived fashion for stoles, incidentally, has swept England. The shops are full of them, in every size, weight, shape, colour and price. Rima showed a long stole of tobacco-coloured taffeta sauvage by Brauchbar of Zurich, with a charcoal button-through dress.

Even in the bleak winter months, the lovely fabrics of St. Gall are not absent from our shops and fashion houses. Roecliff and Chapman have had great success with bridesmaids' dresses of broderie anglaise in melting shades of hydrangea blue and lilac; and all over London there are Givenchy-inspired blouses with great blown-out sleeves, in pastel-coloured silk organzas. At Fortnum & Mason's we saw diaphanous Swiss blouses of silk striped organza with wrist bands of black velvet, others of fine pink guipure and one of charcoal lace over dove-grey organza. At Dickens & Jones' there was a galaxy of silks — grosgrains, needlewoven taffetas, and beautiful Toile Spahir in metallic colours, from Abraham's of Zurich.

England has always been pre-eminent for men's fashions, and dandies from all over the world continue to shop in London for their clothes whenever they can. At Liberty's, the famous silk shop in Regent Street, we found waistcoats, ties and dressing-gowns which would well have become the Regency beaux. The silks were specially woven in Switzerland to Liberty's own design, and included a traditional paisley motif, a shimmering fish-scale effect of iridescent greens and a fabulous gold brocade dressing-gown glittering with multicoloured threads. There were also plain, striped and spotted ties in heavy silk. Finally, let us mention a cornflower-blue wind-cheater for skiing which made one long to rush off to the winter sports at once.

From Ann Duveen.



Photo Lucilla Sherrard

MATTLI

Black velvet afternoon dress trimmed with guipure lace from Switzerland.

HORROCKSES

Cocktail dress in black Swiss organdy with self-woven spots.

Photo Scaioni

