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LONDON LETTER

Casting my thoughts back over the past five or six months since writing my last "London Letter" it certainly seems that a greater range of Swiss ready-made textile goods are now available on the British market. This may, of course, be a reflection of the easing of previous

import restrictions as announced last November by the British Chancellor of the Exchequer.

No detailed official figures regarding imports are yet published but if my impression, after visiting some of London's leading stores, is correct it would seem to



**Marshall & Snelgrove,
London**

Delightful Swiss jersey suit
by
« HANRO »

*Handschin & Ronus S.A.,
Liestal*

Photo Fleet Illustrating Service

prove that a large section of the British public want and like Swiss goods. In general, Swiss manufacturers have one great asset which can now be better exploited — they prefer to produce quality goods.

This same characteristic feature has usually been closely associated with almost all British enterprise and even if recent years have resulted in some temporary laxity by secondary concerns it is still the principle guiding most major and small concerns in this country — the appreciation of quality is still fundamentally part of the British way of life. Providing prices are reasonable, there is a large market opening to Swiss goods amongst the many thousands of British travellers and tourists who, in the past, found their overseas currency allocations too limited to do anything else than “window-shopping” during their holidays or business visits to Switzerland. Oh! the innumerable times that I too have been sorely tempted to spend all my allowance and blow the consequences!

During the past few weeks some of London's leading department stores have either advertised Swiss ready-made garments to a greater extent in the principal newspapers and magazines or they have devoted special window displays.

The London store which has caused a great deal of interest and comment during the past few months is Woollands — in Knightsbridge. Situated near to two other stores it always seemed to me — and, I believe, to many of my contemporaries — to be rather old fashioned and devoted to meeting the needs and wishes of a more elderly and conservative English country gentry. In actual fact a skilful imperceptible change has been taking place for the past four years, but it was a recent and attractive display of Swiss knitwear, blouses, etc., spread over four of its front windows that made me fully appreciate what had been happening. Without disappointing any of its older faithful clientele, the new and young Managing Director, Mr. Martin Moss, has found it possible to modernise his store and so attract a new and young following. As he showed me through his store I was to receive yet another pleasant surprise — the abundance of Swiss goods. In the modernised piece goods department I saw a delightful “Tschin” all cotton brocade produced by Abraham and used by Christian Dior for the present season. S. J. Bloch were represented by a very fine and beautifully coloured Surah silk ideal for summer afternoon wear, in addition this same firm has also introduced “drap de Venise” a blend of silk and wool kept in the darker tones and equally suitable for dresses and two-piece ensembles. In the same department I spotted some Pirate striped Shantung in crisp, clear



Roecliff & Chapman, London

Short summer evening dress: Swiss wool and straw lace.

Photo Noel Mayne Baron Studios

colours with white, which should make gay and perfect holiday mood “Separates”. The idea of “Separates” which became so popular some four years ago shows no signs whatever of dying out.

The knitwear department of Woollands seemed to have a particularly comfortable and friendly atmosphere so that one liked being there and being tempted. A classically striped two-piece by Hanro had the unusual feature — as far as the English market is concerned — of being in grey overcheck. The most interesting style shown to me and made by Victor Tanner was a three-piece ensemble with plain skirt and jacket attractively contrasted and heightened by a neat striped blouse. Perhaps the most thoughtful feature in the present range



Roter Models, London

Wool and silk novelty Jacquard fabric by
Rudolf Brauchbar & Co., Zurich

of Victor Tanner knitwear is the fact that most styles seem to have been designed with some attention to the fuller figure.

By the time this letter appears in print yet two more Swiss enterprises will have been launched on the British market — firstly, “Helanca” Nylon Yarn and some

garments imported from Switzerland made from or containing “Helanca” Yarn; and secondly, “Carina” girdles which will, incidentally, contain “Helanca” Yarn. Neither of these names are as yet known to the public but if I may make a forecast then I have no doubt of a wonderful reception for both.

In the case of "Helanca" processing it seems to me that a new interest and sales impulse will be given to nylon — and perhaps to ladies underwear in particular. Although no woman would ever deny the fascination of nylon — many of us are secretly conscious of its normal "deadness" — its coldness in Winter and warmth in Summer. The "porous" aspect now imparted by "Helanca" processing — quite apart from the extra-soft texture — should make even the most difficult of us perfectly happy. Swiss-made ladies undergarments are being featured by Harrods in London and Marshall & Snelgrove in the provinces, while men's socks are now being taken by Simpson's of Piccadilly.

Roecliff & Chapman, London

Natural and black two piece in Swiss woven fabric with a tassel design.

Photo Noel Mayne Baron Studios



Roecliff & Chapman, London

Evening gown in striped green, grey and gold Swiss organza, with pure silk black chiffon bodice.

Photo Noel Mayne Baron Studios



To close this London Letter may I be allowed to quote a delightful little story which has been going around the Textile Industry. It is typical of the sort of story that goes around whenever there is even the slightest slackening in trade and the present gently humorous story is of the little girl who was asked while at school to write an essay on poverty. And she started her essay in the following dramatic way "I am a poor little girl, my Mummy is a poor woman and my Daddy is poor, the butler's poor and Mummy's maid is poor, the cook is poor and the chauffeur is poor, the gardener is poor and...".

Ruth Fonteyn