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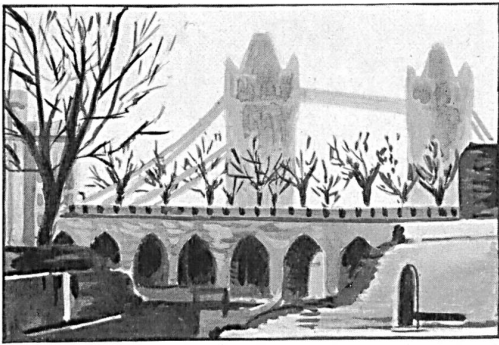
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London Letter

At quite an early age little girls unconsciously start to take pride in their appearance, in clothes and begin their search for personal beauty — usually by raiding their mother's handbags; while little boys cherish the hopes of becoming pilots, engine drivers or even postmen. But the great difference between little girls and little boys is, of course, that the former pursue and develop their early interest in fashion and beauty avidly right through each phase of life and so turn their quest into an art of living, while the latter remain quite incapable of following one interest or hobby consistently through their lives. Someone did once say that women were inconstant — but that, obviously could only have been a mere male.

After all, you must admit it is woman's unending passion and whole-hearted devotion to fashion and personal beauty aids that has prompted the creation of such great industries as textiles, fashion, furnishings, cosmetics etc. and so provided countless useful and fascinating jobs for men who would otherwise have meandered aimlessly through life not knowing how to pass the time away! In fact, I very much doubt if there is a single industry which directly or indirectly is not trying to please and satisfy women — from designing the packs of toothpaste to that of cars and the interior comforts and colour schemes of modern aircraft! How could the world's great artists and fashion designers have achieved undying international fame if it were not for women — and you dear gentle male reader...!

As a small child I too became interested in clothes, but now how intriguing the kaleidoscope of fashion seems when reviewed in retrospect through adult's eyes. Dresses of one hundred and fifty years ago look beautiful almost out of fairyland, those of a hundred years ago are delightfully piquant though a little self-conscious; those of fifty years ago are definitely quaint, or twenty-five years frankly indecent, of ten years ago horrible, of five years ago revoltingly hideous! — and so we come to to-day's line of fashion, which of course, is just wonderful and superbly smart.

The H-line and A-line have quietly merged and with true British compromise given rise to the elegant long-line or long-torso. In some of the English manufacturers' ranges for Summer wear this trend has already become evident but it will be much more pronounced in the forthcoming Autumn Collections.



Rodney Dresses, London

Jacquard brocade by
H. Gut & Co. S. A., Zurich.

Dress manufacturers in this Country are dismissing the difficulty to wear narrow shoulders and the insignificant bust of the A-line. Instead they are concentrating on a long-line bodice, hugging the figure somewhat like the princess line — with or without a belted waist — to a yoked or cuffed hipline. The skirts below this line tend to be pleated or flared, whilst others have fullness on the sides and plain panels in front and at the back. The new silhouette is unquestionably attractive and feminine and the whole effect will be heightened this Autumn by brighter colours in all dress materials.

This greater selection of materials in livelier and richer ranges of colour for Summer and Autumn is

also helping to make the dress manufacturers' position very much easier; on the other hand coat and suit makers have been very unlucky during the past few Seasons and the A-line would obviously be impractical for mass production. The main interest in Autumn Coats will consequently fall on the fabrics used, such as basket weaves, hopsacks, twills etc.; the silhouette will remain straight and details will be concentrated on pockets and low belts to accentuate the low waist.

It is quite possible that corduroy, which never seems to leave the fashion scene completely, will be coming right back again, possibly because its colour range is so excellent and because it is so agreeable for Winter wear, yet sufficiently formal for cocktail wear and evening wraps. Furthermore, corduroy can now be waterproofed.

The smooth transition into the long-line or torso-line is naturally giving new opportunities to other producers, such as those of underwear (in which hemline interest is naturally being developed), corset manufacturers

and, of course, to makers of "Separates" (to whom "tops" or blouses tucked in at the waist are horrors of the past!)

Quite a large selection of the fabrics available to Dress and "Separates" makers come from abroad, but what is particularly satisfying is that Switzerland's share is steadily increasing. Whereas at one time, only the producers of the more expensive garments could avail themselves of the opportunity of buying Swiss textiles, there is now an increasing use of Swiss materials in the ranges produced for the vast middle markets.

I have in fact just seen a very attractive Brocade by H. Gut & Co. (Zurich), now being used by Rodney Dresses — a Firm well-known for its careful styling and faultless finishing in the more moderately priced garments. In the more expensive ranges several wholesale Couture Houses, such as Roter Models, Roecliff & Chapman, Acquer, Marcus, Susan Small etc. are now regularly using Swiss fabrics.



Roter Models Ltd., London

Satin-backed crystal rayon by
Robt Schwarzenbach & Co., Zurich.

As usual I selected a leading London departmental store to note the new Swiss garments and fabrics available to the public — and what finer store could I choose than Harrods. As the French might say “c’est tout dire”.

The active Sportswear Department featured sports shirts in brushed cotton made for men and women and based, in design, on the battle tunic used by the British Services during the war. The shirts in bright plaid design and contrasting colours, such as red, purple and grey with a thin white overcheck, are truly “all purposes” — as equally effective for “after-ski,” wear as for normal Summer holiday wear. The range made by Harrods use the fabric produced by a wellknown Swiss Textile House. In the Juvenile Department the same shirts are available for little boys.

A particularly effective two-piece in jersey-knit for beach or casual sportswear consisted of a sleeveless Jerkin with buttons on the shoulder line and a pair of beautifully proportioned tapering slacks — elegant and comfortable to wear. Swiss-made, the ensemble is particularly soigné, as indeed one may well expect from its wellknown makers. Also in the Active Sportswear Department I found a vivacious sleeveless playsuit, mitre-striped and with a leather belt. It seemed, as

perhaps it should, ready for fun and the sun and there was just a hint, particularly in the cut of the legs that it may have been inspired by someone’s grandfather’s bathing suit! Its well-balanced stripes give it a crisp, candy-cool appearance.

Since most English women are very price conscious, due to a general though gradual rise in the cost of living, I asked if it would be possible to show me a Swiss-made dress, which would retail at a fairly modest price and within, what we now term a “budget” price. Far from being perturbed my escort immediately took me to the Inexpensive Gown Department and promptly produced a captivating jersey wool dress in a spot design, suitable for eleven months of the year (in this Country); it was also becoming for almost every age. Neat and rather classic in line, the sole details were on the collar and repeated on the hip pockets; the skirt was gored. The retail price was only twelve guineas, that is to say approximately 150 Swiss francs!

As our social (and private) amenities develop, so our wardrobes usually grow to suit the new circumstances; television has now brought new styles to televise in greater comfort. Though not strictly necessary it should be remembered that the new television fashions are well worth their expense since they will save on wear

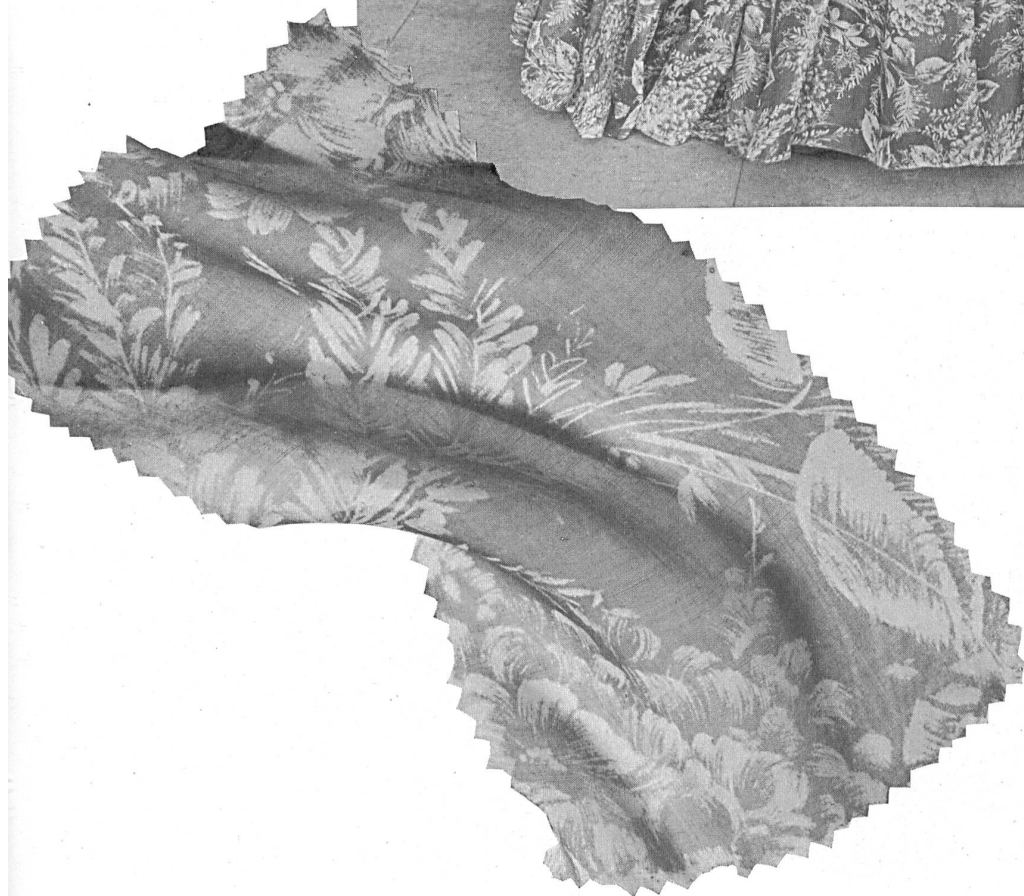


Roter Models Ltd., London

Lamé crystal by
Reiser & Co., Zurich.



Frank Usher, London
Damask Organdy by
Reichenbach & Co., Saint-Gall.





Nabre Models, London

Atout imprimé by
L. Abraham & Cie, Soieries S. A.,
Zurich.

Photo Peter Clark

and tear on other items in our wardrobes! A long red slinky televising jersey coat with buttons down the centre front, wide black fly-away cuffs on three-quarter length sleeves and a wide black band at the hem to match, with slits on the sides, held my eye in the Underwear Department. Surely such a coat could only enhance the setting and improve the programme! This is the first coat of its kind that I have liked — it was stylish, suggested cosiness and was obviously eminently comfortable.

In the Coat Department proper I noticed a full length unlined coat in thick jersey and slightly narrowing towards the hem to give it a gentle barrel effect. With fitted sleeves and large patch pockets, it should make an ideal light-weight coat for the cooler Summer hours.

The name "Bally" is, in this Country almost synonymous with the words "Swiss footwear" and, of course, as with other Swiss made products, signifies quality. The very name inside a model more than half sells that particular article. At the London Offices of Bally Shoes I was fortunate to have a preview of some of the styles to be on sale during the Autumn and Winter months. The main trend seems to be on a very skilful adaptation of the 1920s line, when shoes were pointed at the toes, which, of course, follows on to-day's fashion line. Some of the new pointed shoes will have strapped insteps and some will be trimmed with large buckles but the most striking will be the reintroduction of the high-heeled tie shoes, a style which will be welcomed by most women since the feet will have more protection and more support. An additional new look will be given

Khaki-green Gabardine Court
Shoes with black buckle and heel.

Bally

After-ski Slipper in red leather
and black woollen ribbing.



by a pearlised or lustre finish to calf leather. A backless shoe with an elasticated top edge and square heels seemed to me particularly attractive and comfortable for indoor wear, though many may be tempted to wear it for outdoors as well. A striking "after-ski" wear slipper with red uppers and a black ribbed woollen top, shaped to slip snugly over the ankles should prove to be an equally effective normal slipper line — or maybe for televiewing. In fact this slipper would match perfectly the televiewing coat I have mentioned a little earlier in this letter!

Have you heard that after making nylon shirts, orlon dresses and dacron suits, the Americans are now trying out a new material called cloth?

RUTH FONTEYN



Frank Usher, London
Flockprint Organdy by
Reichenbach & Co., Saint-Gall.