

Zeitschrift: Swiss textiles [English edition]
Herausgeber: Swiss office for the development of trade
Band: - (1957)
Heft: 1

Artikel: London letter
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798395>

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London Letter



HEER & CO. LTD., THALWIL

Draplyne fabric (rayon and wool).

Model by Rembrandt, London

Photo Peter Clack

One of our trade publications recently reproduced a cartoon which appeared in the Wall Street Journal and which illustrated two characters; one presumably a textile buyer, the other in front of stacks of rolls

labelled Dacron etc. showing a fabric and saying "Here's a miracle fabric that might interest you. It's made from the very fine, soft, shiny fibres laboriously produced by a species of worm in spinning its cocoon".



L. ABRAHAM & CO., SILKS LTD., ZURICH

« Olor-Metal » fabric coat with chiffon muslin lining.

Model by Frederick Starke, London

Photo Zanton

For some considerable time I have thought that when silk again became readily available on the British market at moderate prices, a campaign should appear in our main magazines etc. describing silk to our young teenagers (who are certainly fashion-conscious but also textile-bewildered) as a new wonderfully soft or artificial rayon. This is not in reality as far fetched as it may at first seem—few of our younger set have had the opportunity of knowing and appreciating silk. The new “soft look” brought about sometime ago by the re-emergence of chiffon in various fabrics may well gain general popularity, helped no doubt by the gradual influence occasioned by the play “My Fair Lady” now in the States and which may reach this Country by the end of the present year. “My Fair Lady” is, of course, a musical adaptation of the famous play by Bernard Shaw, “Pygmalion”.

Although the fashion trend is set towards softness, both in fabric and in line—the pattern for the Summer is so confused that one can say “anything goes”. The younger set will continue to choose crisp cottons, sepa-



REICHENBACH & CO., SAINT-GALL

Embroidered « Everglaze » cotton satin.

Model by Michael, London

Photo Transatlantic

rates and dresses with wide whirling skirts—usually stiffened with underskirts. Stoles to match or contrast are in almost every Collection and are included with the dresses. The many reasons why cotton is still so popular with British Teenagers are, of course, so obvious that they need no further elaboration. It is mainly in the more sophisticated ranges that the softer look is creeping in with falling-away shoulders, folds and drapes and it is in this range that “anything goes”; hemlines waver up or down a little or even do both in the same garment; busts, waists or hips, however, are to be worn as Nature intended—with or without emphasis, singly or collectively.

There is little doubt that the present Paris “softer” trend is setting a problem for the average British mass producer. The marked features of cut and silhouette or the novelty “gimmicks” of detail are absent from the present lines—the definite leads are missing. Furthermore, the technical problems of a mass production of a number of aspects in the softer look are quite considerable. However, as the year progresses we will

no doubt see various interpretations of the bloused bodice with the cross-over line—either in the front, in the back or both and a number of attempts to reproduce skirts with front drapes and straight or “V” draped backs.

Coats can be three-quarter length, normal jacket length or full-length but in this section of the market there is one thing certain, coats are facing a severe competition from rainwear producers, who are offering colourful, rainproofed garments in lightweight poplin etc. In many cases the shower-proofed raincoats are indistinguishable from the ordinary unproofed materials or styles—but the point which will no doubt baffle many average shoppers is the difference in price between the proofed and unproofed styles—the first mentioned, including matching hat being usually considerably cheaper than the unproofed styles!

Apart from the teamed dress and jacket, which is an established favourite with so many English women, there is now a lively interest in the dress and cape and

even in the dress and full-length coat. Generally speaking it is the dress with its matching bolero which is gaining particular attention, made in a variety of fabrics and ranging from formal silks and laces to cottons for general holiday wear; as regards the dress and coat ensembles the introduction to the medium priced ranges has been made possible—largely by the use of cottons. Coats are frequently in matching materials or single tones, lined with materials to echo the dress—or even in a contrasting fabric or colour. An important selling factor of the coats is their adaptability to team-up with other dresses as they are usually cut on casual *slip-on* styles—and even suitable to wear for cocktails or evenings. On the eternal separates side, various garments continue to be made to contrast or blend and *generally ring as many changes as possible* with other items—even the little explored possibilities of the Swimsuit Section are now finding themselves blessed with new interests such as skirts and jackets!

When I was shown the other day by the London



FORSTER WILLI & CO., SAINT-GALL

Pale pink embroidered organdie.

Model by Ronald Paterson, London

Photo Charles Wormald

**METTLER & CO. LTD.,
SAINT-GALL**
"Everglaze"
Jacquard cotton fabric.
Model by John Cavanagh, London



office of H. Gut and Co Ltd the fabrics now being offered to the trade for the Autumn Season, it was immediately obvious how easily the new fabrics reflect some of the new trends and at the same time try to bring a new character to the more "*hardy perennials*". For the "softer look" I found what I am sure will be one of the finest silk chiffon ranges of the Season; the handle was soft yet firm and the colour scale delightful throughout.

In an equally good colour selection I was shown a silk organza with a gay and elegant plaid pattern, which should be particularly attractive for cocktail and evening wear. The sheer sight of these two fabrics and the fashion imagination they invited were enough to make me finally decide that I too should follow the gentle persuasion of "*My Fair Lady*".

Ruth Fonteyn