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London Letter



Stand of the Swiss Cotton and Embroidery Industry at the First International Trade Fashion Fair, London (November 18-22, 1957).

Photo R. W. Luckins Studio London

What an eventful Autumn, we in the Fashion world, seem to have had !... Bank Rate up and retail sales figures down ; a new « flare-up » in the ever recurring dispute on British sizings for women's garments and an epidemic of « the dithers » by both manufacturers and buyers over the Sack-line for Spring and the degree of its influence. There is too a growing awareness that the Free Trade Area is no longer mere « talk » but a reality to be faced very shortly — and perhaps even to be welcome — and in a lighter vein there is much discussion on the merits of the new Television Fashion Programmes — the immediate demands

they can create and the influence they can have in shaping feminine and male-interest in women's wear. If, after all this, any of us still regard our various activities as being deadly serious or decidedly important we can immerse ourselves in some of the recent publications, such as « Productivity Review », « Retailing » and various Surveys showing the influence of women in the different industries and trades.

It is against this background that the Spring and Summer Collections are being shown — with manufacturers possibly selling a little harder and buyers ordering a little

more cautiously. There is, however, no real lack of confidence, no senseless panic but just a calculated restraint on the part of most retailers. To comment very briefly on some of the prevailing aspects mentioned above — the rise in the Bank Rate was, of course, unfortunate but obviously necessary; the present arguments on sizings of garments for women is no less unfortunate but should by now be quite unnecessary. It is both stupid and confusing when the same sizes quoted by different manufacturers (i.e. Size 12) are in fact quite different sizes. When a Size 9 among some manufacturers can be larger than a Size 10 amongst others and equivalent to a Size 12 in a third group it is high time retailers took up a fight on behalf of themselves and their customers. After all what woman can take kindly to being Size 9 in one range and Size 12 in another!

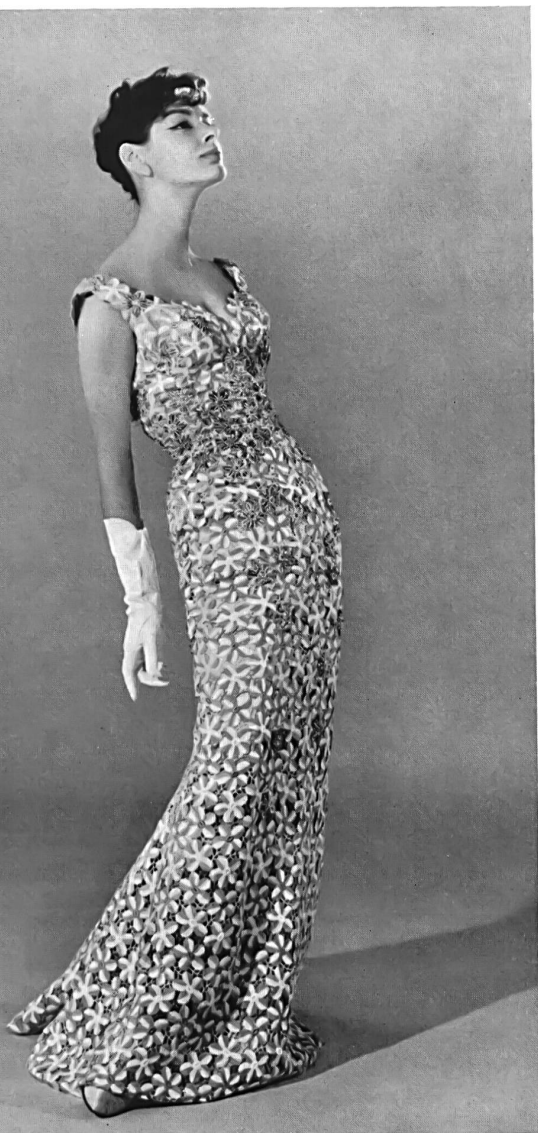
It is, of course, quite probable that the prospect and opportunity of a Free Trade Area will add weight to the retailers' case and finally bring uniformity and clarity.

A gradually increasing number of the smaller manufacturers who have so far been frightened or perplexed by export trading are realising that this is a new problem which must somehow be solved and which may in fact not



Part of the stand of the Swiss Cotton and Embroidery Industry at the First International Fashion Fair, London.

Photo R. W. Luckins Studio, London



only offer new opportunities abroad but also help to extend their home market. Over the next few Seasons many of them will try to acquaint themselves with the peculiarities and tastes of the various European markets and try to establish all the factors in common between certain markets abroad and their own immediate home conditions. It could be that the new circumstances will bring about a greater degree of specialisation and a sharper limitation of prices and style ranges amongst the different producers.

As regards the presentation of fashion by means of Television which until this Autumn was limited to very occasional transmissions and then only for the major London designers, such as Hardy Amies, Hartnell, Victor Stiebel etc. A new force has now been introduced which

UNION Ltd., SAINT-GALL

Heavy cotton guipure.

Model by Marty & Co., Zurich (Shown in the fashion parade at the International Fashion Fair, London)

Photo Tenca



JACOB ROHNER Ltd., REBSTEIN

Embroidery on fine cotton.

Model by R. Cafader & Co., Zurich (Shown in the fashion parade at the International Fashion Fair, London).

Photo Tenca

All these happenings in the Fashion world are stimulating, bring a much needed sense of adventure, shake lethargy where it exists, promote public interest and develop a better appreciation. The First International Fashion Fair held in November at the Albert Hall has also played a part. Switzerland and Italy exhibited some of their products and brought a Continental freshness.

The Swiss stand sponsored by the Association of the Cotton and Embroidery Industries of St. Gall, was one of the major items of the Exhibition and was particularly in evidence because of its elegant appearance, its balanced presentation and because of the quality it featured.

will exert considerable influence on the average public. The impact is right in the home when couples and families view together ; and although there is still much to learn in the production of such programmes, in the necessary lighting changes required for different fabrics etc., there is no doubt that over the course of the next few months better presentations will be televised and that these programmes will produce new or additional sales within the reception areas. These sponsored Fashion transmissions are, of course, only effected by the Commercial Stations and the number of viewing homes has now reached the figure of 4,541,000 and is increasing monthly at a rate of about 150,000.

J. G. NEF & Co. Ltd., HERISAU

Plain and imago printed organdy.

Model by H. Haller & Co., Zurich (Shown in the fashion parade at the International Fashion Fair, London).

Photo Tenca



**L. ABRAHAM & Co. Silks Ltd.,
ZURICH**

Pure silk floral print.
Model by Frederick Starke, London

Photo David Olins



Naturally the products of several well-known firms were exhibited — in fact some twenty six houses were represented, all of whom have established Agents in the United Kingdom. Christian Fischbacher Co. showed some very effective woven Cottons but the most delightful, in my opinion, was a graduated self-stripe specimen which had a muted sheen reminiscent of satin. Honegger & Co. and Jacob Rohner presented fine lawn handkerchiefs, although this last mentioned is better known here for the more elegant embroideries, many of which are supplied to leading manufacturers of repute, such as Morleys etc. Printed Cottons from Otto Moetteli and embroidered ranges from

Reichenbach, Bischoff Textil; embroidered fabric by Walter Schrank & Co. and embroidered organdies by E. Roelli & Co. and Forster Willi & Co., these are but a few of the names both well-known and not-so-well-known which helped to create a very outstanding display of fine craftsmanship and quality.

Personally I hope that this Swiss participation in a trade exhibition marks the beginning of a policy which will be continued. The British market has never been easy to enter, but it certainly offers a stimulating challenge — and eventually a fair return for one's efforts!

Ruth Fonteyn