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London Letter

The fashion trade, from both the retailers' and manufacturers' positions, has been experiencing a very disappointing spring season, the coat and suit section having been already affected by a poor autumn because of the mild weather up to early December. The fact that there is some degree of recession in most countries and most trades is but small consolation so that the different firms, in seeking at least a partial solution, try to overcome the secondary causes. As far as the fashion trade in this country is concerned the main contributory factors for

the present weak sales are, first of all, the increase in rents and the accompanying uncertainties for the many who are looking for new homes, then the mild autumn which coincided with the new higher rents—and the present unkind spell of cold, rainy, unsummery weather, and finally—in my opinion—a certain temporary hesitation on the part of the public on the new skirt length but principally (again this is my own opinion) because of the apparent lack of fashion adventure by many retailers. From my own observation it seems that it is the



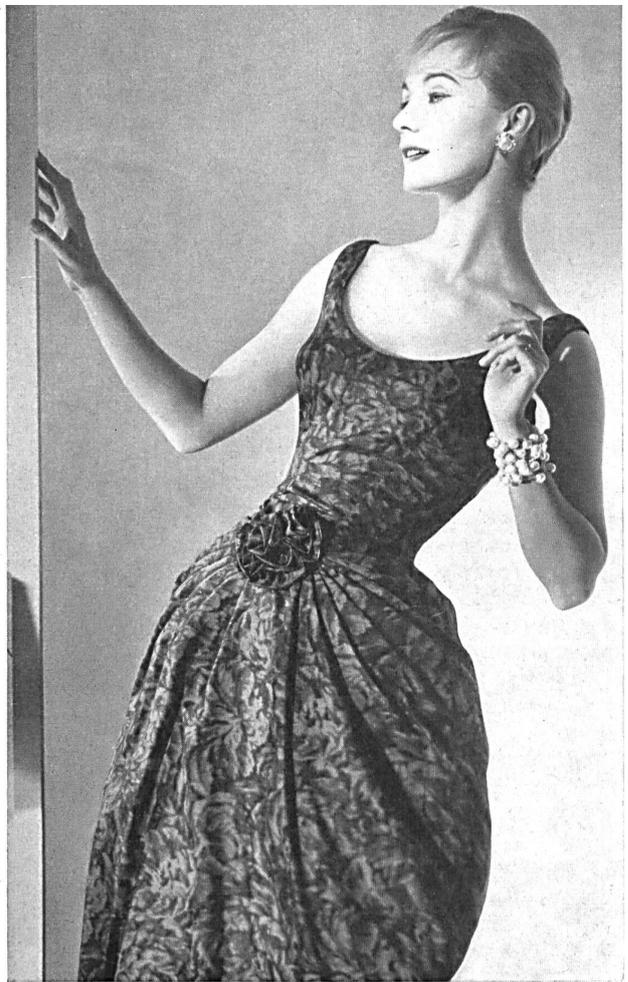
UNION S.A., SAINT-GALL
Organdi de soie brodé
Embroidered silk organdy
Modèle: Newmar Couture, Londres
Photo Mirrorpic



«ZURRER», WEISBROD-ZURRER
FILS, HAUSEN s.A.
Nylon transparent imprimé
Nylon sheer printed
Modèle : London Town Dresses Ltd.,
Londres
Photo John French

L. ABRAHAM & CIE, SOIERIES S.A.,
ZURICH

Shantung imprimé, pure soie
Pure silk printed shantung
Modèle : Roter Models Ltd., Londres
Photo Alexander, studio Vanessa



L. ABRAHAM & CIE, SOIERIES S.A.,
ZURICH

Super Miyako
Modèle : Roter Models Ltd., Londres
Photo John French



L. ABRAHAM & CIE, SOIERIES S.A.,
ZURICH

Shantung pure soie
Pure silk shantung
Modèle : Roter Models Ltd., Londres
Photo John French



STEHLI & CIE, ZURICH
Crêpe romain pure soie
Pure silk crepe romain
Modèle : Roter Models Ltd., Londres

retailers who have dared to push the latest trends that have done the best business during the past few months, the "safe" or "sure-selling" lines have to a large extent remained safe and untouched on the rails in shops and warehouses. The influence of teen-agers or of those in their early twenties on their mothers' wardrobes is not sufficiently appreciated—fashion to them is excitement, it's fun and adventurous and they want to see their mothers exhibit the same interest in their own clothes. Nowadays there can be no room for dullness or dowdiness, in fact many of the over-forties or fifties can wear the new lines with even greater grace and charm than their own daughters!

In a recent London Letter I gave an indication of the importance and spending power of the teen-ager and younger set and mentioned that they held the purse-strings to £13 million weekly; now the Government has published a Survey of Household Expenditures (effected four years ago) in which various analyses are made—including expenses on clothing. The Survey was established on a household or family basis and therefore overlooks the expenditure on fashion of the younger unmarrieds, which would have been interesting and valuable. According to the Survey, 'Mrs. Average Briton' has two children, an income of between £10 and £14 per week and allocates some 11/-d. of this to her outerwear, underwear, stockings, millinery and gloves. In households with incomes of between £14 and £20 per week, the housewife's expenditure on fashion is approximately 15/-d. For those not so fortunate, with family incomes varying between £8 and £10 per week, the wife's allowance for clothing is approximately 6/11d. per week. But the most striking revelation from the Survey is that all these women spend more on tobacco than on fashion—which adds weight to my argument that women must be wooed by all in the fashion trade by better promotion and a greater feeling of excitement or adventure. Women will spend if the new seasonal lines can be shown to suit and flatter them.

The new short skirt length is, of course, now established and will be with us for some time to come. The younger set have shortened their existing wardrobe—with the exception of overcoats, which are naturally more difficult to alter; the older women are slower in taking to the new length but if some of them are not won over by the time autumn arrives, I think they will establish their own individual compromise with fashion!

The chemise line and its adaptations have not yet been adopted by the younger women—they have left them for the summer to their more sophisticated and older sisters while they continue to favour cottons with full skirts and underskirts. The trapeze line and its variations are, of course, also popular with this younger section of the market, particularly in cotton with jackets short and usually double-breasted; the accompanying dresses are long-bodied with low pleated skirts.

As far as the chemise or loose line is concerned in the production for the mass market—it is being resolved into a gently bloused bodice, frequently at the back and caught by a low curved belt. The skirts are usually slim so that the general effect is one of gracefulness and should be particularly becoming on older women with dignity and poise.

From the autumn collections now being shown in London, it is evident that this same bloused-back line will be extended to suits as well; the short jackets cut to give a gentle curve.

Coats too will provide much needed interest—in the main based on the trapeze line; they will be bulky and wide-hemmed and often with unpressed folds from the shoulders and centre back; for the maturer figure styles will be roomy with large collars and dropped shoulder lines.

It is my custom to visit either some London store or an agent for the London Letter; on this occasion I went to the offices of Mr. Walter Schaffhauser—situated within the magic half-mile circle where most of the fashion houses have their West End showrooms. Mr. Schaffhauser represents both the Union Co. Ltd. of St. Gall and Stoffels and I was shown, as is usual on such visits, magnificent materials many of which are unfortunately too expensive for extensive sales. In the Union range I was attracted by white embroidered poodles on white poplin suitable for summer dresses and the same poodles on cotton organdy ideal for blouses and more formal garden party gowns. For evening wear—a golden yellow silk embroidered organdy with appliqué embroidered flowers was quite breath-taking! Stoffels were represented by rather more practical and readily saleable lines—woven piqués, printed muslins and voiles in cotton and a fascinating blouse fabric, also in cotton, and obviously inspired by Mexican blanket stripes, gay and strongly coloured.

RUTH FONTEYN.



«RECO», REICHENBACH & CO., SAINT-GALL
Elegantes broderies sur popeline
Fashionable embroidered poplin
Modèles et exposition: / Models and display:
«The White House», Londres
Photo Evelyn Lees

