

Spring is drawing nigh

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Dear Celia,

Apparently, because I have had occasion to view a few collections during the Zurich Export Week, you seem to believe me capable of telling you all about Spring Fashions. I do not flatter myself that I can, but I shall at least give you a few extracts from my notebook because, my dear Cousin, as my duties led me to attend several fashion displays, I did jot down a few notes on your account. They are only jottings, please remember, hasty and inconsequential notes... but here they are for your pleasure...

Coats and tailormades in very fine materials, hundred percent woollens, of course — duvetines, tweeds and so on. For sport and morning wear, swagger, very full styles. I was very much attracted by three-piece ensembles with the suit of the same material as the coat. There were two, especially, in chevron tweed, one red and the other green; the coat very full in the back with two inverted pleats falling from the shoulder, giving straight, full width. The same idea was also carried out in contrasted shades, for instance, a brown suit with beige coat.

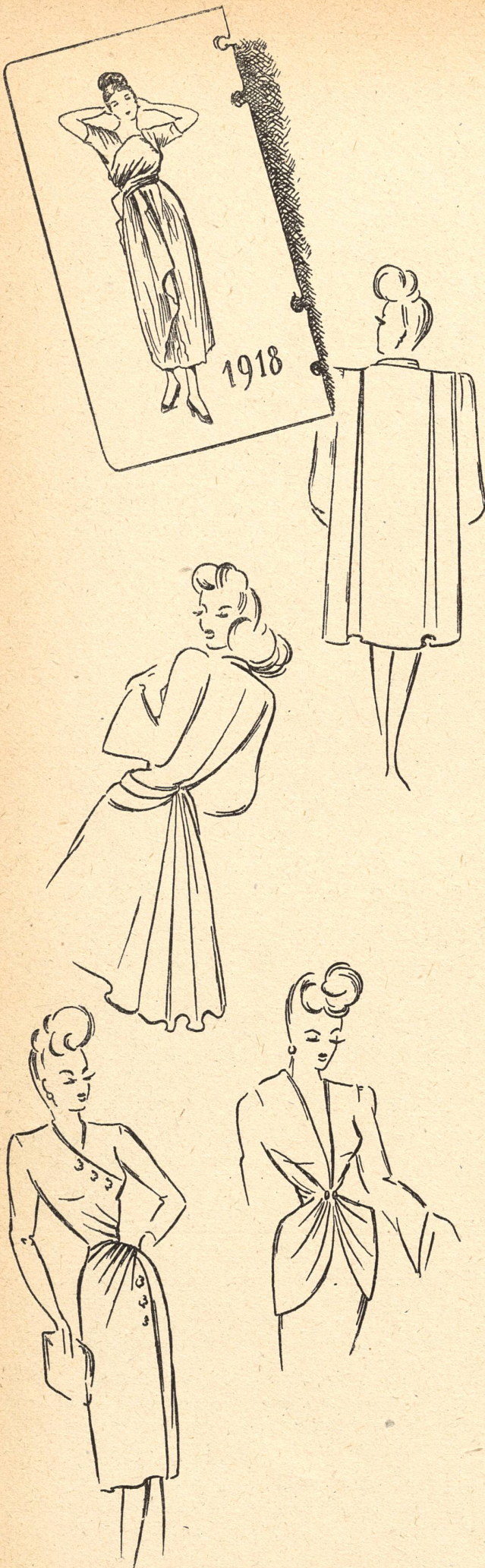
Smart styles in coats are very waisted, emphasising the hipline; few but very large buttons. The skirts of these models are very full and gored, trimmed with big pockets either appliqued or with the openings concave or convex, the movement accentuated by heavy stitching to stress the hips.

Even in tailormades, the hip-line is accentuated and this new idea is sometimes reminiscent of old «panier» styles.

Do you know that, apart from the rayon georgette blouses with embroideries and insertions, cotton voile styles with hand-sewn lace incrustations are still popular. The latter are more classical, more aristocratic, shall we say, less well-known to the younger generation, because they recall a great period now long past which glorified the skill of the embroiderers of Eastern Switzerland.

Smart afternoon dresses are returning to slim-waisted, fullhipped styles, attriump of the «wrap-over»: there are bustle and draped effects, gathers, folds and puckers. I found this sketch of a model by Worth in a 1918 fashion journal; with a few alterations, you would find it quite fashionable now... but, not in taffetas as here! In black crepe mousse or crepe sablé — that is what is being worn today. Notice the movement in the 1918 style which gathers both bodice and skirt on one side; you will find this same trend, even more marked, in our present fashions. In some models, horizontal gathers on skirt or bodice terminate in a button-up effect and in a large bustle falling in heavy folds; the skirt is a wrap-over, almost always embellished by a rather voluminous draped effect. The asymmetrical movement of both skirt and bodice are usually on the same side, generally on the left.

Black is not the only colour worn, of course. Prints are popular, too, especially in rayon, but also in pure silk. In one collection showing a wide range of printed afternoon styles, I noticed some very novel swagger-cut straight jackets with rounded basque effect, rather like



DRAWING HIGH

a bolero. There was yet another jacket style with rounded line over the hips, tightly fitting waist and a straight, full back. There is also a reversion to the «false» bolero, that is to say, with bolero effect in front and not at the back; «false» two-piece suits, also, in which the front of the dress is given a jacket effect by pockets and buttons, the back being all in one piece.

In other collections, there were many printed styles, both for smart town wear and the little afternoon frock. Waist-bands, forming a wide, rounded yoke in front, gathering in the folds of bodice and skirt, are knotted into a sash at the back. All these symmetrical styles are, of course, far more youthful than the sophisticated «wrap-overs».

Light summer wear for teen-agers and their older sisters are in linen or cotton fabrics or boiling-proof rayons. In these styles, wide raglan or so-called «butterfly» sleeves seem to have returned, and even sleeveless styles are to the fore again. These models are youthfully symmetrical, with belted waist-line and wide, round «bib» collars, widening the shoulders and edged with frills or scallops. In some models, the bib is used as a trimming for the front of the bodice only. The same line is also obtained by large flounces falling from the shoulders. Vivid colours predominate for plain frocks — scarlet, royal blue, canary yellow — but softer shades can also be selected: dove grey, lavender, crushed strawberry, moss green. There were many original styles in striped fabrics, of the type beloved in America, but not too garishly novel. Some models show a vertical stripe in the skirt and a horizontal one in the bodice, or vice versa; in others, the stripes are modelled lengthwise or used to frame deep, narrow décolletés, forming a square or rounded «bib». One charming idea for a neck trimming, was a pin-tuck between each stripe, forming the neck-line and giving fullness to the bodice.

For evening wear, classical styles are still the fashion: full-skirted, in fine heavy fabrics. Tulle, organdie and other delicate fabrics remain for youthful ball wear. There is a tendency however for a straighter line, a Parisian trend, with the new «wrap-over» effect described, or with full sunray pleats. One model presented a very novel effect with a yoke on the front of the bodice into which pleat-like puckers were gathered. Another striking model was of black velvet, with bolero-shaped bodice of white guipure. Apart from the classical printed and embroidered organdies, tulle, embroideries and laces, one finds that velvet and chiffon and even jersey fabrics are increasingly selected for evening wear.

And now both my memory and my note-book fail me! Maybe another time I shall write you about some other congenial subject, but... why should you not tell me some day about masculine fashions, Cousin Celia? Men like to hear what the fair sex thinks about their styles, you know!

Meanwhile I remain, dear Celia,

Yours sincerely,

Florestan.

