

Fashion has come down from the mountain

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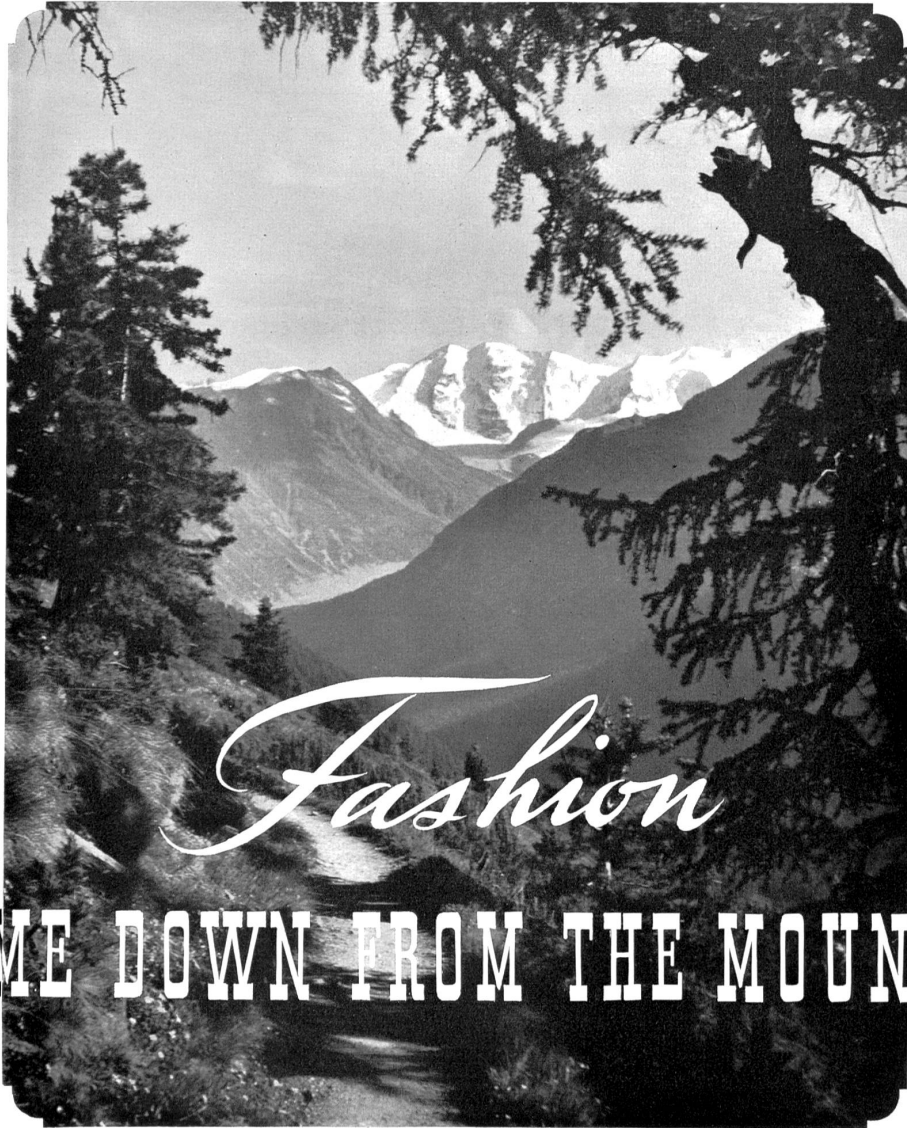
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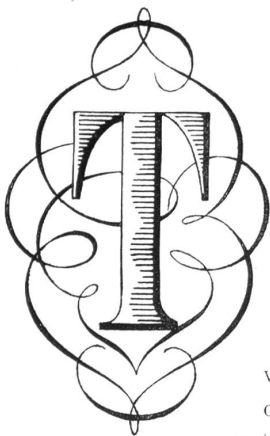
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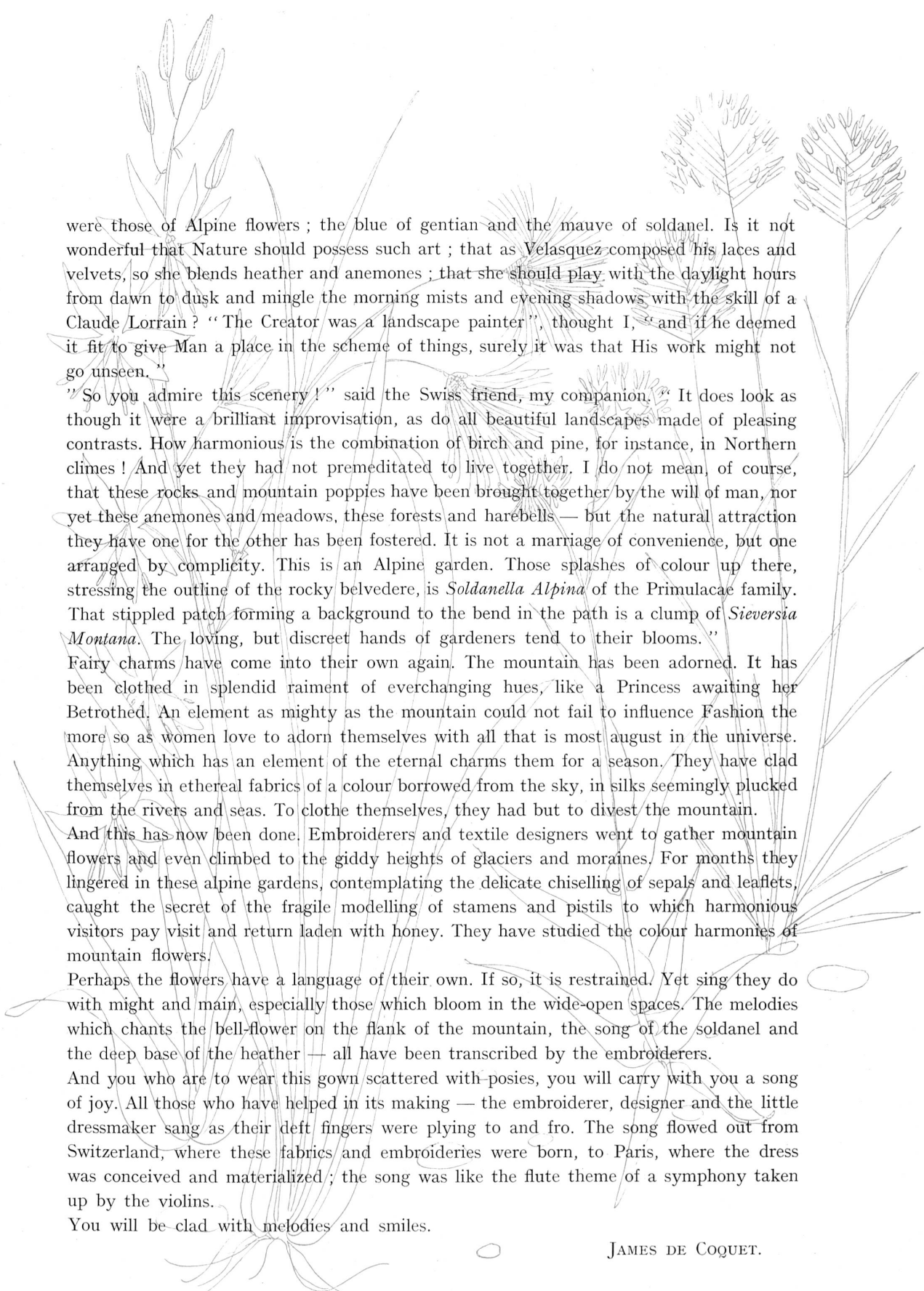


HAS COME DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN



THAT day, the mountain was bewitched. Here among the boulders gushed a saffron-hued cascade ; there, along a rocky ledge danced flames of green. Jewels of blue studded the undulating line of the meadows, a stream of white flowed across a spur of sandstone, like the Milky Way across a summer sky. When a cloud sailed across the sun, the landscape seemed to disintegrate till its colours were recomposed in other tones. Blue became slate grey, yellow glowed like honey, white turned to ivory. And again the picture faded away like a dream, only to come to life again, but with new depths and contrasts. Had it not been for the sharp air with its twang of mint and the tingling in our cheeks, we might have thought ourselves under some fairy spell.

It was in the Canton of Appenzell and the symbolic shape of the Säntis Mountain, ever present in the background, crowned this pageantry and testified to its reality. Nature was playful, throwing colours and reflections through the day. The colours of her palette



were those of Alpine flowers ; the blue of gentian and the mauve of soldanel. Is it not wonderful that Nature should possess such art ; that as Velasquez composed his laces and velvets, so she blends heather and anemones ; that she should play with the daylight hours from dawn to dusk and mingle the morning mists and evening shadows with the skill of a Claude Lorrain ? “ The Creator was a landscape painter ”, thought I, “ and if he deemed it fit to give Man a place in the scheme of things, surely it was that His work might not go unseen. ”

“ So you admire this scenery ! ” said the Swiss friend, my companion. “ It does look as though it were a brilliant improvisation, as do all beautiful landscapes made of pleasing contrasts. How harmonious is the combination of birch and pine, for instance, in Northern climes ! And yet they had not premeditated to live together. I do not mean, of course, that these rocks and mountain poppies have been brought together by the will of man, nor yet these anemones and meadows, these forests and harebells — but the natural attraction they have one for the other has been fostered. It is not a marriage of convenience, but one arranged by complicity. This is an Alpine garden. Those splashes of colour up there, stressing the outline of the rocky belvedere, is *Soldanella Alpina* of the Primulacae family. That stippled patch forming a background to the bend in the path is a clump of *Sieversia Montana*. The loving, but discreet hands of gardeners tend to their blooms. ”

Fairy charms have come into their own again. The mountain has been adorned. It has been clothed in splendid raiment of everchanging hues, like a Princess awaiting her Betrothed. An element as mighty as the mountain could not fail to influence Fashion the more so as women love to adorn themselves with all that is most august in the universe. Anything which has an element of the eternal charms them for a season. They have clad themselves in ethereal fabrics of a colour borrowed from the sky, in silks seemingly plucked from the rivers and seas. To clothe themselves, they had but to divest the mountain.

And this has now been done. Embroiderers and textile designers went to gather mountain flowers and even climbed to the giddy heights of glaciers and moraines. For months they lingered in these alpine gardens, contemplating the delicate chiselling of sepals and leaflets, caught the secret of the fragile modelling of stamens and pistils to which harmonious visitors pay visit and return laden with honey. They have studied the colour harmonies of mountain flowers.

Perhaps the flowers have a language of their own. If so, it is restrained. Yet sing they do with might and main, especially those which bloom in the wide-open spaces. The melodies which chants the bell-flower on the flank of the mountain, the song of the soldanel and the deep base of the heather — all have been transcribed by the embroiderers.

And you who are to wear this gown scattered with posies, you will carry with you a song of joy. All those who have helped in its making — the embroiderer, designer and the little dressmaker sang as their deft fingers were plying to and fro. The song flowed out from Switzerland, where these fabrics and embroideries were born, to Paris, where the dress was conceived and materialized ; the song was like the flute theme of a symphony taken up by the violins.

You will be clad with melodies and smiles.

JAMES DE COQUET.

In this number models created in Paris from speciality products of the Swiss textile industry.



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