

Zeitschrift: Swiss textiles [English edition]
Herausgeber: Swiss office for the development of trade
Band: - (1955)
Heft: 3

Artikel: London letter
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798486>

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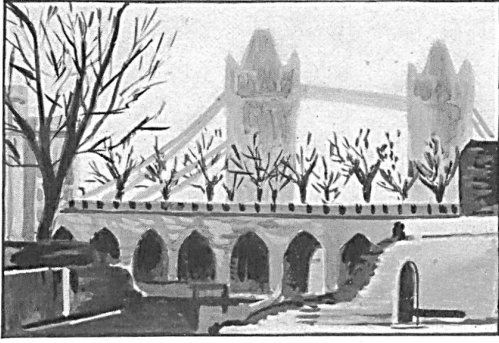
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London Letter

It was Shakespeare who made one of his most famous characters say « The time is out of joint ; Oh cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right » — fortunately this latter part does not apply in my case. But you may remember I mentioned in a previous Letter that some retailers were offering summer dresses in January; and strange as it may seem the practice continues to turn a blind eye to the fact that over the past few years the warmer weather (when it has been good enough to come to us) has done so rather

later than some twenty or thirty years ago, so that now summer sales and bargains precede the warmer weather ! Although it may be true that the finer qualities are frequently not included in these sales, the unfortunate result is that the sales take place and absorb the money which should be spent on normal stock at normal prices. Summer sales should not take place in early June before the warmer weather starts but just previous to the main holiday period, namely late July and August. Winter coats and suits are already



Frederick Starke Ltd., London
 Silk and rayon mixture by
Rudolf Brauchbar & Co., Zurich
 Photo Zanton



Frederick Starke Ltd., London
 Pure silk organza by
L. Abraham & Co., Silks Ltd., Zurich
 Photo Zanton



Frederick Starke Ltd., London
 Woven rayon by
L. Abraham & Co., Silks Ltd., Zurich
 Photo Zanton

beginning to appear in the first days of August in some London shops — although we may still have to face another heatwave or two !

It is true that a complex system seems to bind the trade into knots. Competition and the fear of competition, of someone else « catching the early bird », are partially responsible. But the situation is rendered still more ridiculous by the fact that the retailer complains of the difficulty of getting the goods on time and the manufacturers equally clearly state that time to produce the goods is the main problem. And so back to the retailer who further complains that because he cannot receive the complete deliveries in good time he is unable to reorder on selling numbers — to which the manufacturers then reply by pointing out the shortage of labour, the uneven flow of orders conflicting with a production system which demands a constant flow, and while all this is going on the fabric suppliers also demand more time for weaving, dyeing, printing and finishing. Out-of-season buying by the public when shortages existed was understandable but in this present time of surpluses a new reorientation is becoming necessary.

Generally speaking, trade buying for the coming Autumn and Winter season has been brisk and quite confident. In the loose swagger ranges the emphasis is unquestionably on the A-line ; seemed to suggest a narrowing at the shoulders, buttoned accordingly and with width at the hems ; fitting coats may have a fullness below a smooth hipline or low slotted belts to mark the long-waisted look. Almost all coat collections have broad collars while scarf or cravat effects are also making a return visit. The most striking feature, however, is the reappearance of fur trimmings. Obviously expensive furs can only be used on higher priced garments but a considerable amount of beaver lamb, persian lamb and lynx is being used in the popular price ranges. Fur collar trimmings are usually liberal and large and it will be interesting to

note how the younger generation will take to this use of fur which many had thought to be « old fashioned » ; but women who knew the pre-war styles are sure to welcome again this sense of luxury.

Colourful tweeds, ribbed woollens and mohair mixtures will be popular. So many coat and suit manufacturers are offering three-piece ensembles, i.e. top coat, jacket and skirt, that one wonders if this is to court the specialist Fashion House as opposed to the store buyers who are so controlled and limited in scope that a coat buyer could not possibly buy the matching suit — and vice versa.

The general feeling amongst trade buyers is that suits will again sell better than heavy winter coats between September and December and most have made their plans accordingly. Because of the new jacket length and the accompanying new lines, this section of the trade can look forward to the Autumn with much greater confidence ... and if the manufacturers can sell matching top-coats in sufficient quantities, they will have turned the new line to good account.

Suit jackets will, in the main, have smoothly fitting waistlines rather than straight neck-to-hip cuts, as this is not only more flattering to the average figure but it also compromises most happily with British traditional tailoring and, of course, with British traditional capacity for compromising !! Tweeds are again, in this instance, the favourite choice though smoother clothes with streaked or flecked colour contrasts may well win the eye and approval of the ultimate buyer. Flat fur trimmings are being effectively used on simple collars and revers ; in a few cases fur-fabric lined suits have been designed by manufacturers catering for the more expensive ranges.

Dresses, whether cut in one piece or made up in the popular « separates » style will have the two-piece look with the dropped waistline, cuffed or banded hips and with the A or H-line skirt.

W. & O. Marcus Ltd., London
 Novelty rayon brocade by
 Max Kirchheimer Söhne & Co., Zurich
 Photo Vernier



The wide hemline of the A look will most probably appeal to the younger customers who are still enthusiastic over pleats — pressed or free — and gathers; the straight skirt will almost certainly be instinctively chosen by the smarter women throughout the country. But perhaps the greatest effects of the new long-look changes are being reflected in the cocktail gown ranges — in fact this might be regarded as the new covered-up-look. Strapless tops — with separate jackets — are out of line. Necklines are now high and wide across the shoulders, squared or «V-ee», while the long bodice fits closely and smoothly. Cocktail gowns and short evening gowns have been so much alike in the recent past that customers have frequently not been able to distinguish one from the other! As might be expected some rather lovely fabrics are being used; satins, brocades and metal-thread materials, which are particularly well-suited to cocktail gowns.

As most of you may have noticed, I usually try to visit one or two stores to discover what Swiss goods they are offering to their customers. For this Letter I chose to go to Peter Jones of Sloane Square. In 1864 a Mr. John Lewis started business in a small Oxford Street shop and in 1906 he and his sons bought the controlling interests of Peter Jones. Later the entire business was turned into a partnership for the whole of the workers.

By 1920 Peter Jones was trading at a profit; from being a failing concern when originally bought, it then showed a profit of some £20,000 and each member of the staff found himself receiving ten weeks extra money over his normal wages. This marked the start of the Partnership Benefit as it was then called. The modern premises are regarded as being amongst the most up-to-date in London.

During my visit to this shop, I saw some shoes of a Swiss make less well-known over here than Bally — a particularly attractive court style in sealskin dyed to delightful jewel shades. A quality shoe also by the same firm in suede calf with an elegant long toe has an original open buckle let in the front, cut through to show the stocking. The Bally shoes bought by Peter Jones for the Autumn

are surely going to set afoot a new fashion value. Comfortable shoes have not, so far, often been associated with elegance nor have they usually been «à la mode» but the shoe I saw in calf with a fairly high fronted «mid-riff» in elasticated suede and with either medium or high heels is an exceptionally smart every day shoe for the attractive woman who is on her feet all day long. To older feet it is exceptionally kind in more ways than one. As an evening shoe for teen-agers I was shown a small heeled style in black or white satin bowed and ornamented with bronze beads in a floral motif. And once again, daintiness is exquisitely wedded to comfort. Unfortunately at the time of my visit the various departments were obviously very much depleted in stock and awaiting the new deliveries for the coming season. However, I did see an interesting range of novelty handkerchiefs in lawn by Kreier. One design had a diet chart — so useful to check up on when you're out at lunch or dinner — and another with useful advice on «How to keep your husband». It never occurred to me before that such indispensable advice could ever be condensed on to one handkerchief.

The knitwear department were expecting shortly the delivery of their new range. One of these, produced by a famous Swiss house, has an interesting neckline — cross-over straight down on one side to the hem of a slim skirt. The only trimmings consist of twin buttons and button-holes on the neckline and on the hipline. Another dress (and by another well-known firm) in jersey knit has bands of grosgrain at the neck and tiered over a slightly flared skirt. A belt is available for those who wish it and who may be more classically minded. I had never seen a nightdress in wool lace before — but what a wonderful way to have both glamour and warmth. During the colder winter nights I know I shall be thinking again of these long-sleeved night charmers!

Gossip in the gown trade — they say, business has been so good this Summer that manufacturers are now re-employing their sons-in-law.

Ruth Fonteyn