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Letter from London

Where smart women gather

With Swiss cottons continuing to hold their own, despite the great advent of synthetics into the world markets, this might be a good time to examine the great strength of a great store, some idea of whose size and buying power can be gained from the fact that during the first half of this year it bought over 12 million yards of embroidered trimmings and novelties.



Sir Simon Marks, the brain and the power behind Marks & Spencer



One of Marks & Spencer's Department Stores, London

Mrs. Jan Karro, head of sales and design for «Simplicity Patterns», plans to tour schools in the United Kingdom presenting models made of Swiss cotton fabrics.



A view inside the shop



Princess Antoinette (center), sister of Prince Rainier of Monaco, accompanied by Mr. Hans Schneider, while shopping at Marks & Spencer.



In the cutting rooms

The store is... Marks & Spencer, most famous chain store of its kind in the world, with 238 shops throughout the United Kingdom alone, where princesses and duchesses shop happily alongside the well-dressed and price-conscious working girl and housewife, who know just where to buy for value and chic.

This wonderful man, whose empire controls 25 thousand employees, and whose turnover is £ 148 millions per year, still works as actively as any one of them, and is the inspiration and driving force of the business. He is looked up to as the policy maker, quality control expert, and a stern and just critic... From his elegant suite of offices in



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

Tissu « Aragonne » pure soie et métal
Pure silk and metal « Aragonne » fabric
Tejido « Aragonne » seda pura y metal
« Aragonne » — Gewebe aus reiner Seide
mit Metall

Modèle Christian Dior, London

At the head of this enormously successful group, regarded as a retail phenomenon, stands its dynamic Chairman and Joint Managing Director, 72 year old millionaire, Sir Simon Marks, who recently became Lord Marks of Broughton... the man whose watchword is « Quality First ».

Baker Street he watches the interests of the public constantly, and cuts staff and prices ruthlessly to maintain quality and give value, at the lowest prices he can possibly arrive at, maintaining the top standard he is so justly proud of.

Photograph taken during a B.B.C. TV broadcast, arranged by Mrs. Margot Macrae and featuring St. Gall embroideries. Models (from l. to r.) by Cavanagh, Mattli, Cavanagh, Hardy Amies, Ronald Paterson, Lachasse.



Don't let the words chain store mislead you. You might well call this immense empire for the masses, the Balenciaga of the people, for the wheel turns full circle in its search for simple elegance, and indeed very often a « best seller » is a Balenciaga, a Chanel or a Fabiani re-created.

Many of the smartest and best dressed women in Britain shop at Marks & Spencer, and admit it proudly

and publicly. Princess Grace of Monaco, and more recently Princess Antoinette, sister of Prince Rainier, spent several hours one morning choosing dozens of garments for their families... beautifully dressed French mannequins here to participate in Paris Couture shows, lose no time in finding the famous shop, and the Duchess of Windsor and Marilyn Monroe the American actress are



« Nefertiti » Turban in Swiss embroidered silk organdy, shown by the B.B.C. during a TV broadcast on St. Gall embroidery, organised by Mrs. Margot Macrae.

Broderies de Saint-Gall
St. Gall embroideries
Bordados de San-Galo
St. Galler Stickereien

Modèle Angele Delanghe, London



Modèle Ronald Paterson, London



Modèle Mattli, London

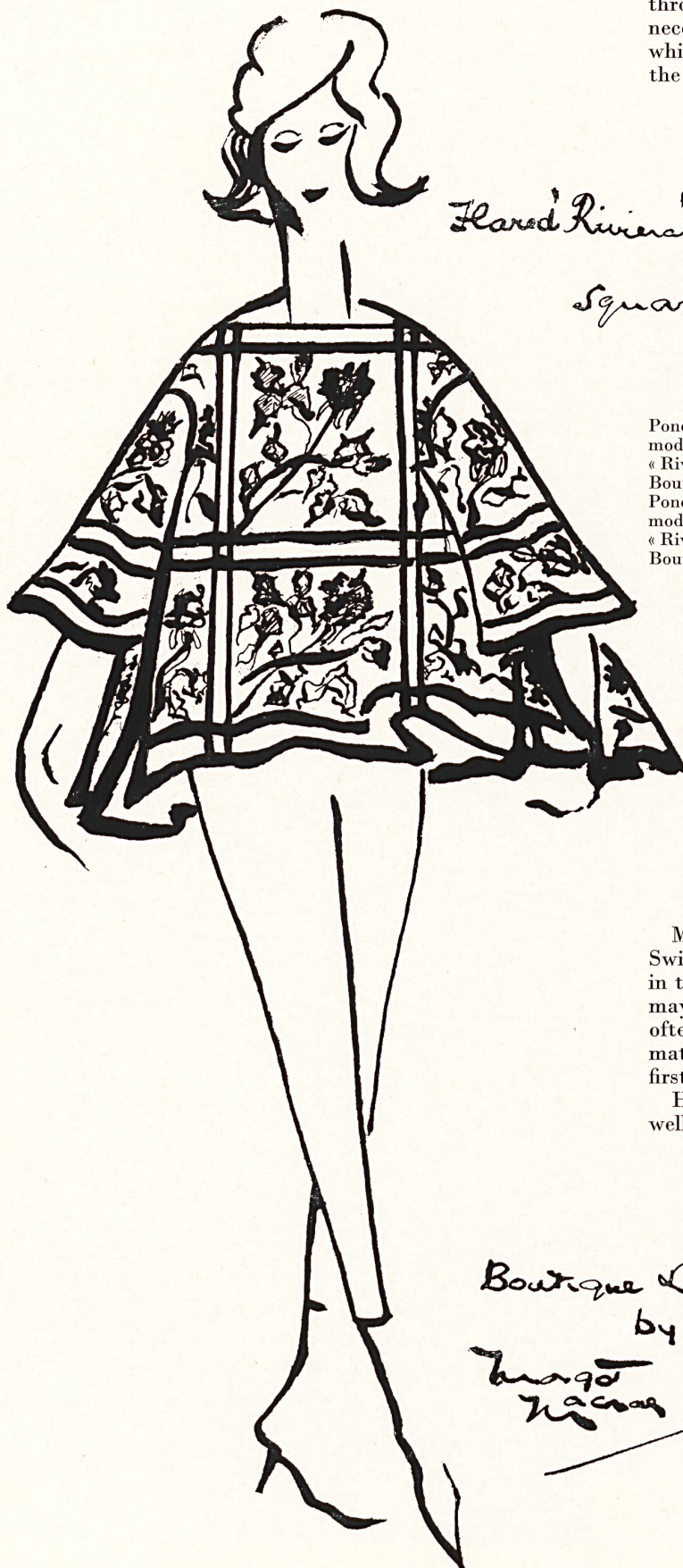
Photos Publizitätsstelle, St. Gallen



Modèle Victor Stiebel, London

other « well-knowns » who have no hesitation in shopping for simplicity and good taste at a sensible price.

Two important executives who are connected with this firm are Mr. Hans Schneider, Top Fashion Controller, who travels widely to Italy, Paris, Switzerland and America, buying with superb taste the originals to be adapted, and Mr. John Anderson, Chief Materials Buyer, through whose hands pass the millions of yards per year necessary to the constant output of up to date garments, which the store's 5 million customers who pass through the doors weekly, constantly buy.



*Flared 'Riviera' Poncho in
Swiss Handkerchief
Squares of Swiss
Tweedlin.*

Poncho « Riviera » en mouchoirs suisses ;
modèle boutique de Margot Macrae
« Riviera » Poncho in swiss handkerchief squares ;
Boutique model by Margot Macrae
Poncho « Riviera » hecho con pañuelos suizos ;
modelo boutique de Margot Macrae
« Riviera » Cape aus schweizerischen Tüchli ;
Boutique Modell von Margot Macrae

Mr. Anderson says « We are the biggest customer of Swiss materials, including lace, embroideries and cottons, in the world — we like screen and roller printing, and we may use from 40 to 50 thousand yards of the one design, often exclusively created for us — value begins in the materials used and we regard Swiss materials as absolutely first class in design and finish ».

Hans Schneider is a greying handsome man in his 40's, well-known internationally ; he has his own atelier close

*Boutique Design
by
Margot
Macrae*



Manteau de pluie en tissu de coton suisse hydrofugé
Raincoat made of Swiss water repellent cotton fabric
Abrigo de lluvia en tejido algodón hidrofugado suizo
Regenmantel aus schweizerischem impräniertem Baumwollgewebe
Photo Trevor Clark, London



to his offices in the Baker Street block. In the atelier, a team of over 40 designers play their part in the scheme of things and there begins the evolution of a garment towards its ultimate destiny.

Hans Schneider has this to say : « What we are trying to do is to combine the ideal garment of simplicity and taste with the trend of up to date styling ».

This they achieve, and take immense trouble and care to do it, from the moment the expensive original model is studied, adaptation ideas sketched by designer-artists, into the pattern rooms to be tested and master-cut into 5 exact sizes, materials chosen after a severe testing, then to the factories or wholesalers to be made up, with complete instructions on cutting of material, depth of seams to be allowed, quality of inter-lining, and even the buttons and the zip fasteners carefully chosen.

Perfection assured, costing follows, then quickly into the shops so that the public may well have the latest style in from Paris whilst the news is still hot in the newspapers.

An interesting fact emerges, that all material samples are tested in the research laboratories before large orders are completed, running the testing gamut of washing, fading, colour fastness, crease resistance, shrinking and everything else possible to ensure that the finished article will be a good-looking product.

I spent a wonderfully interesting couple of hours with Mr. Schneider in the atelier and store. The sales assistants, all women, looked charming and competent in their pale blue overalls, the racks were full of frothy, pretty short petticoats and nightgowns trimmed with Swiss embroideries, and one noticed that already the flared line — so recently confirmed by all Paris — is here from the dresses to the under-garments, selling like the proverbial « hot-cakes »... children's dainty dresses in rows looked irresistible, and even men's shirts of Swiss batiste and fine cottons looked immaculate, but it is not surprising that everything looked so fresh and attractive when one realises that the huge turnover is steady and constant, and under constant supervision from the perfectionist at the helm.

Margot Macrae

Manteau de daim confectionné en Suisse
A nigger starcalf coat made in Switzerland
Abrigo de gamuza confeccionado en Suiza
Brauner Suède-Mantel, schweizerischer Fabrikation
Modèle Berg of Mayfair, London
Photo Michel Molinare