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London Letter

An eventful summer is now gracefully slipping by, but the memory of its pageantry will linger with us for many years to come.

Quite apart from the magnificence of the Coronation itself and the traditional splendour of the receptions and garden parties which accompanied it, this regal summer has given London women a unique opportunity of observing the fashions worn by visitors from overseas. At the same time there has been a return of a much greater variety of fashions and fabrics in the major stores. The effects of these two factors may well play quite an important part in shaping the fashion trends which will take place during the next two or three years.

Departmental buyers in the principal stores have for some time now been aware of a marked hardening in

home sales. This is due to the fact that while goods have become more plentiful, the cost of living has risen. For although there are those of us who delight in the return of quality goods, unfortunately most of us have now to consider the price element. There is, however, a large proportion of women belonging to the younger set, engaged in earning their own living, who can hardly be expected to have a true understanding of quality and are consequently attracted by the opportunity of larger wardrobes at much lower prices. But it is from this younger element that new and more discriminating customers will eventually emerge.

This constantly growing young market offers a wide opportunity to manufacturers and retailers, and, at the same time, a challenge to the producers of more expensive



ROECLIFF & CHAPMAN, LONDON
Afternoon or cocktail dress in Swiss
gaufre black taffeta.

Photo Noel Mayne/Baron Studios

ROTER MODELS, LONDON

Afternoon gown made in Swiss cristal rayon.

Photo Transatlantic

and better quality ranges to concentrate on young gay styles.

As we look back over the last few months, we find that in addition to the London Couture Houses an increasing number of gown and blouse manufacturers have been using quite a considerable range of Swiss organzas, lace, nylons and cotton, while buyers of the major stores in London and the provinces have been exceptionally keen to avail themselves of the limited quotas at their disposal. It is, of course, only natural that the summer months should offer greater scope for the more vaporuous Swiss textiles. Amongst the Couture Houses that have been using Swiss fabrics can be included Norman Hartnell, Victor Stiebel and Hardy Amies, while amongst the better wholesale manufacturers can be included the names of Roecliff & Chapman, Susan Small, Acquer, Dorville and C. D. Models (Christian Dior, London).

After so many summers of rayon reigning supreme — because of restrictions, it has been very exciting to watch the revival of cotton as a favourite material, which promises Swiss cotton manufacturers continued success throughout the autumn and winter months.

A few days ago, while visiting Harrods, an internationally known London store, I made a point of looking at the different articles made of Swiss cottons. In the underwear department, I found an attractive pyjama set in patterned brushed cotton. The fleecy feel of the material and the colours are truly exciting, while the Edwardian style trousers undoubtedly add a saucy charm quite apart from giving comfort for the colder nights. Nightdresses with long sleeves and in the same brushed material are also available (Hanro).

In the piece-goods department, cottons are certainly comparing very favourably in both price and design; colourful plissés, fine check lawns, flock organdies — the majority of these seemed to come from Nelo and Stoffels.

Swiss knitwear enjoys a very special and privileged position, and judging from the early sample ranges I have seen it is quite apparent that the Swiss knitwear manufacturers intend to hold this distinction. Harrods knitwear department will, this autumn, be featuring excellent new creations by Oumansky, Hanro and Egeka, etc. One of the most arresting jumper designs has a horizontal sporting pattern effected in two contrasting colours and looks particularly attractive when matched with a plain multi-pleated skirt. Side by side with the newer creations are some of the ribbed knitwear styles which proved so popular last season and which will, no doubt, repeat their success during the present season.

For me and the other two million « petite » women in England, this is going to be a wonderful autumn. Dior has included two small mannequins in his collection — so we are no longer neglected. As regards the shorter skirt length, can there be much doubt that Dior has again been shrewd and detected what we want before we quite knew ourselves.

Ruth Fonteyn.

ROTER MODELS, LONDON

Evening gown in Swiss guipure lace. Can be worn with a long sleeved bolero to match.

Photo Transatlantic

