

Mercier — without leaving his own proper realm — that of *modes* and of elegance — often delights in operating as artist, and as advertising expert at one and the same time. Some of the advertisements shown here prove in how masterful a manner he is able to solve such problems. And Mercier is one who constantly transforms himself — even within the scope of the advertisement. At one time he works in a markedly conventionalized or stylistic manner (as, for example in the design, for the Cécil Shoe), then again he becomes the pure symbolist (as in this advertisement for Drecoll in which the lady wears three pearls as a kind of mystic decoration about her throat — these three pearls personifying the three branches of the firm). Generally, to be sure, Mercier is a devotee to phantasy and to the fable — never, on the other hand, like so many of his contemporaries, does he create in a purely intellectual manner. He loves line much more than the idea — he would rather seduce than convince. And there is certainly a deep truth in the voluntary modesty with which he says of himself: "I am, first of all, a draughtsman."

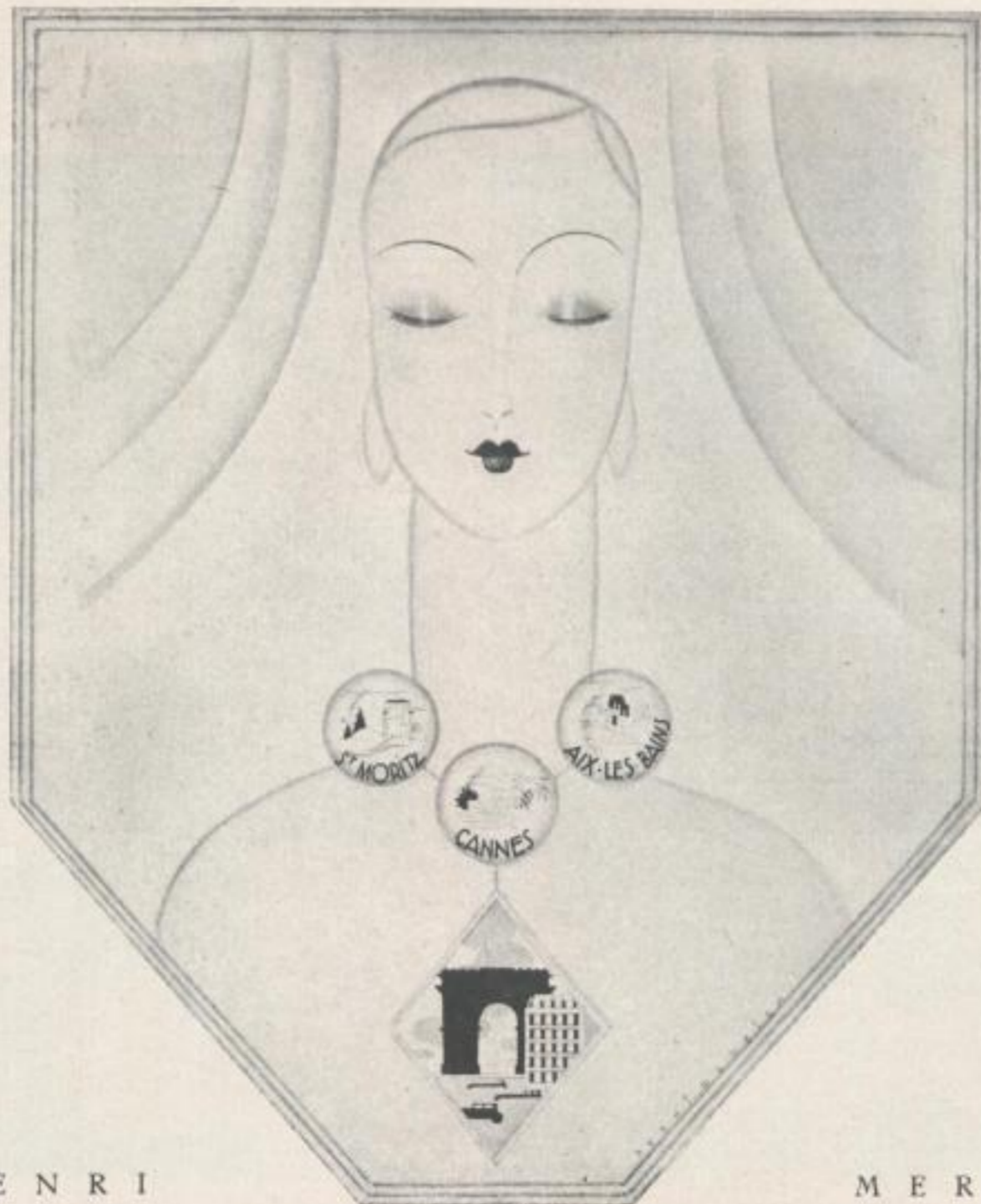
It would, of course, be an exaggeration to say

that Mercier's style is absolutely original. Mercier, like Benito and Benigni and Mourgue, has his own conception of the modern woman, who embodies all that is slender, supple and delicate, and also his conception of art which aims at simplification, construction and abstraction. And yet he also has his own and particular originality. He has, above all things, that sure and inborn quality of never exceeding the bounds of good taste. And he has been able to let this good taste operate with such grace that he has been able to bring this French gift, which so many Frenchmen now deny out of sheer snobbery, once more to a creditable position in France.

Mercier's technical conscience is so pronounced that even the slightest of his drawings through the care with which they are executed operate like nature works of art.

Mercier finally shows a great predilection for the miniature. The extraordinary delicacy and surety of his line, the precious lightness and daintiness of his drawing, which he carries out so subtly and yet so simply, bring his works close to those of pure Oriental art.

*Translated by H. G. Scheffauer.*



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