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# Strawbraid

**T**HE Swiss straw braiding industry dates back two centuries and holds an important place on the world market. Its products are in fact exported to all the big towns and capitals in Europe and oversea. Swiss manufacturers have never been content to rest on their undeniable successes ; on the contrary, ever in close contact with world fashion centers, they have always renewed their efforts and made new ventures. The success of Swiss strawbraids is due to the quality of the material employed, to the continual creation of novelties and to the excellent organization of the industry. In this respect, it is worthy of note that the machines employed are constantly being improved and modernized ; moreover, many of the weaving looms and accessories are of Swiss invention.

There are actually in Switzerland about twenty mills exclusively occupied in braiding, situated mostly in or near Wohlen where are to be found tens of thousands of looms representing hundreds of thou-

sands of shuttles. This intense industrialization has not however brought about the disappearance of homecraft braiding, which in the early days of the industry made the name of Wohlen famous and which today still occupies an important place in the production of hand-plaited braids and hat bodies. Whereas at first only locally produced rye straw was used for braiding, as soon as mechanical plaiting was introduced, other materials were adopted (wood, raffia, cuba, etc.). After 1910 the production of artificial silk with its varied aspects and easy adaptation to dyes made possible the creation of a great number of new materials admirably suited to braiding. Swiss manufacturers at once set to work to make the best possible use of these materials and today they are in a position to deliver hat bodies and especially strawbraids of infinite variety and richness.



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