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INTRODUCTION

It might almost be said that out of poverty have come the riches of Switzerland — that small country which, set in the heart of mountains enchasing the emerald and azure waters of many lakes, lies far inland from any sea. Switzerland has always lacked material wealth and raw materials, and the Swiss have worked hard to obtain both ; unable to produce goods in large quantities, they have always had to pursue the ideal of quality. This tendency is apparent in the development of Swiss industries through the centuries. Whether patriarchal, rural or domestic, these industries require but a minimum of raw materials and have, from the first, specialised in precision work and tended to achieve perfection. Thus dynasties of peasant-craftsmen arose, the craft of watchmaking being handed down from father to son over the same work-bench in a corner of the kitchen ; or the art of embroidery passed on from mother to daughter seated, generation after generation, at the same window in which bloom pinks or geraniums. And so craftsmanship, attention to detail and delicate skill made their way into the humblest cottage, developing in their adepts the qualities of intelligence and good taste, refining their touch and imagination and requiring of them virtues of tidiness and cleanliness.

Thanks to the quality of their products, these industries soon gave rise to trade, a welcome source of income, and became a means of exchange to obtain all the resources the country lacked. The exquisite embroidery of the women of Appenzell, the delicate watches made by mountaineers of the Jura, these products, enshrining the work and love of craftsmen, became Switzerland's best ambassadors to the four corners of the earth.

Although Switzerland was widely industrialized during the XIXth century, the nation's conception of work remained almost unaltered, the majority of executives having understood that their country could only compete in international trade rivalry by the quality of its products. Swiss goods have thus conquered a special place in the great markets of the world.

Despite the fact that the war has slowed down and even, to a great extent, interrupted international trade exchanges, neutrality has imposed upon Switzerland the duty of keeping national industrial activity alive in spite of everything, not in order to gain wealth, to take advantage of the universal disorganisation or to ensure the country's material position, but merely in order that the nation might live and remain sound and, by laborious effort, contribute in its own way to future reconstruction.

Conscious of this necessity and encouraged by the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade*, executives of the Swiss textile industry and its allied branches remained undaunted by innumerable difficulties, raw material shortages and uncertain prospects and, ready for any sacrifice, decided to keep the flag of Swiss industry flying. Calling on the co-operation of artists, craftsmen and workmen and resolutely leaving the beaten track, abandoning routine work, readapting looms and machines and changing their outlook, their ideas and even their gestures, textile manufacturers have, by this united effort, succeeded in producing the most magnificent fabrics ever made on Swiss looms. Thanks to most minute research, the quality of substitute materials is such that they can be employed by the best couturiers. Rayon and staple fibre fabrics have been constantly improved and are now fully worthy of competing on an equal footing with pure wool or natural silks. Incited by the example of textile manufacturers, jewellers, shoemakers, glovemakers, strawbraid manufacturers, milliners, corset-makers and couturiers realized what was expected of them and, at the cost of great sacrifices and much research work, they also succeeded in creating new and beautiful styles.

Together, the craftsmen and designers of these various trades have co-operated in the creation of a most amazingly beautiful collection built up around a few chosen themes : *Ropes and Fishing-Nets* (colour scheme : rust, navy blue, brown, yellow, off-white), *Seashells* (pink, beige, grey, dove-beige, lavender blue, bois de rose, sea-green), *Aquatic Plants* (white and all shades of green), *Mermaids* (white and dark, warm shades). This collection not only reveals the creative spirit and originality of the Swiss character, but also offers new horizons and unlimited possibilities. Inspired by the poetic value of the themes and stirred by their faith in an ideal, the creators of this collection have, as it were, waved a magic wand over the hard, black forge of reality and brought forth a dazzling jewel, a fantastic myth, a pageant worthy of the Arabian Nights.

* At a fashion parade held this spring in Zurich, the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade presented its " Special collection ". In the following pages we have reproduced some of the choicest models of the collection ; others will be illustrated in the next number of " Swiss Textiles " (No. 4/1943).

