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The Quest of « Novelty »

With its usual inflexible regularity, the hands of the great clock of time point to a new season. When Nature sheds her gay attire, men don warm apparel. Nature sleeps... but men ! How can they rest when the present hour urges them to action, lays ever new problems before them, requires that they should discover new processes each day, for now are being laid the foundations of the future : and this is true also for industry and especially for the textile industry.

Winter 1943/44 : Streets and shop-windows flaunt hand-spun rabbit wool coats, « felted staple fibre » tailormades, « linhiver » (winter linen) jackets... New words — expressing new conditions — arise in the adaptable vocabulary peculiar to the dressmaking world... words which yesterday were contradictory, today combine to form new expressions.

Novelty ! Ever and always novelty ! Will not the wheel of Time ever wear out this term by incessant use? What can you give us which is not old?... Or, better ! What can you give us which is *worth* the old, for every month as it passes makes reserves grow shorter, exhausts stocks of raw materials and devours ideas as with a giant appetite?

This question crops up before manufacturers and tradesmen with sinister regularity as the days of tragic wartime seasons succeed each other. « Something new ! How we would like to produce that something new ! If only... » But the desire to create will not be denied by « ifs » : we must and shall have novelty !

And indeed, is not novelty always a question of line, form, fabric?... « Let the significance of things lie in your gaze, not in the things at

which you look » a poet once said ; and again : « May your vision of the world be renewed each moment. »

Today, the mind of man creates new things even where good taste and intelligence would formerly have refused to see possibilities of renewal. And, not only does mind impose this new created thing, but also makes incredible formulas born of an amazing epoch acceptable to man's good taste and intelligence. Further, taste and intelligence shape these formulas, just as one would fold and crease a sheet of paper to make boats or flowers or birds. Will these formulas ever grow into time-honoured traditions? We cannot say, because the spirit of our century is rudely jolting the very notion of tradition.

But one point is important, and this is the demonstration of energy which this quest after novelty implies, and its subsequent victory. It also implies that new horizons have been opened and that in future synthetic fibres will play their part, that scientific and technical research necessitated by material shortage will yield a harvest of ideas and discoveries.

The object of the « Swiss Fashion Textiles » model displays is to show what constant efforts are being made by the textile industry. The fifth fashion parade of this kind, which was held in Geneva on August 26th and 27th and in Bern on September 7th (the first illustrations of which were published in N° 4/1943 « Swiss Textiles »), was devoted to **Holidays in the snow**. Our readers will understand that it was impossible for the photographers to place the mannequins in a setting of snowfields and that they had to be content with the background of the parks and gardens in which the displays were presented. We must therefore ask our readers to call upon their imagination and visualize these styles against the winter snows.