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FOREWORD

THE SWISS TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Products of the Swiss fashion textile industries are sold all over the world and are particularly appreciated by all who prize good quality in the commodities they buy. For this reason, these industries have always set a high value on the choice of raw materials, on their factory equipment and the training of their workers. They have always kept in touch with the great fashion centres of the world and the taste and requirements of consumer countries.

The present world war has adversely influenced Swiss industries ; it has severed them several times from their customers abroad and has deprived manufacturers of the stimulus of foreign demand. On the other hand, the shortage of goods has caused clients to be less exacting in regard to fashionable novelties or technical perfection.

Nevertheless, in spite of all, executives of the Swiss fashion industries have done everything in their power to maintain their high standard of production. They have, on their own initiative, studied the requirements of fashion and untiringly extended their field of activity. They have never lost sight of the fact that peaceful times will return once more, leaving men free to turn their thoughts to all those things which make life beautiful. Elegance of dress will come into its own again. They also know that Swiss industries will be forced to compete with the creative powers of all countries where fashions are considered as an important element of daily life.

For this reason, the Swiss textile industries have united their efforts, in order to take stock of their potentialities, to enhance the standard of their products by applying the results of wartime experiments and, as in the case of other Swiss export industries, to prepare themselves for the post-war period, so that they may be well to the fore on world markets.

The war has thrown all countries on their own resources and this has, in many cases, led to the discovery of quite unexpected, or as yet unexploited, potentialities. It was thus quite natural that the tendency to co-operate should arise of itself and only a small impetus was required to group together all the creative energies of the industry.

Switzerland possesses a very widely-ramified textile industry. The silk industry includes all stages of manufacture from spinning to the production of the finest weaves. The centre of this branch is in Zurich, where are also to be found most of the leading producers of finished silk goods. — The silk ribbon industry of Basle has long held its ground on world markets. — The cotton spinning and weaving industry, always universally recognized, is centralized in Eastern Switzerland, around the trade and industrial centre of St. Gall. The extreme diversity of its products has conditioned the development of a cotton finishing industry in the same region. A particularly famous, and characteristically Swiss branch of the industry is embroidery, originally a home-craft of the Appenzell women, which later gave rise to a mechanized industry in St. Gall. But in this case, the machine has in no wise prejudiced the artistic hand-made article. — Woollen manufacture has again developed considerably of late, while jersey and knitted goods have won a place on world markets. — The linen industry has held its ground by the quality of its products and secured the interest of foreign fashion buyers. — The export trade of the millinery braid industry, centralized in Wohlen, has always been important. — The reputation of Swiss footwear has long been upheld on the five Continents by the leading firm of the industry.

Despite the war and its attendant hardships, the co-operation of all these industries has resulted in the production of a Special Collection of fashion products, which stands out by its artistic and technical perfection. Switzerland has no intention of becoming an international fashion centre ; her territory is too small for that, nor does she possess any great metropolis, nor yet any claim to influence the mode of life of other nations.

Nevertheless, Swiss fashion designers and couturiers have very ably seconded the national textile industry. We hope that, after the war, the fashion creators of other lands, and particularly those of the great international centres, will show their appreciation of Swiss fabrics.

The Collection " Swiss Fashion Textiles " specially formed for Exhibition purposes in no way tends to inspire an actual fashion. We know that the countries now involved in war are not very exacting as regards novelty for the time being. But we are working for the future, for the future of Switzerland and for that of the art of fashion. We are serving this art by the remarkable quality and originality of the fabrics our industries have produced. Their object is to serve as a bridge which will lead from the thought of combat to the aims of peace and of a life inspired by the arts.

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