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## Zurich

## SILKS

In the old days, «Zurich taffetas» was a household word. These beautiful plain silks were worn by cottagers and townsmen in Zurich and the neighbouring countryside and their remarkable workmanship won world-wide fame for their products. We have already had occasion to speak here\* of the Zurich silk industry, its rise and development. Today, this craft has become an industry with many ramifications and it can, in many respects, rival the production of the most famous world centres. And, without necessarily restricting their activity, certain Zurich firms — and not the least — are still specializing in the production of plain, piece or spun-dyed silks which range from the most zephyr-like of crepes and organdies to heavy grosgrain, through the whole scale of taffetas, poults and failles. Since the introduction of the Jacquard loom and, later, the perfecting of printing processes, Zurich silk weavers have been producing all types of fancy and fashionable fabrics imaginable, apart from standard, current lines. Their manufacturing programme is therefore most extensive and diverse. Some firms specialize in plain silks and, at the same time, also produce prints and colours; others consider it a point of honour to produce all types of fabrics: plain, colour-woven, Jacquard, prints, dress and lingerie fabrics, necktie and kerchief fabrics, soft furnishing and upholstery, lining and umbrella fabrics.

As in the case of all other Swiss industries, the weaving of silk in Switzerland is influenced by certain characteristically national factors: a taste for fine materials and good quality, love of good workmanship and skill, facility of adaptation to the requirements of other markets. The policy of the industry is therefore clearly defined: to produce good quality wares. It will never be able to compete with mass-production mills whose strength lies solely in their capacity for marketing large quantities of current lines. But there will always be a public for fine, exclusive fabrics and the Swiss silk industry is called upon to supply the world what other countries do not want to manufacture because its cost is too high, or cannot manufacture because they have not to hand the required technical and artistic conditions such a production demands.

Several Zurich houses have therefore won a name in the domain of «latest novelty» production. The silk weavers of Lyons were formerly the unchallenged masters in this respect, but since 1939 Switzerland has achieved such remarkable progress in printing technique (screen printing, «Orbis» printing, etc.) and in the preparation of dyestuffs, that she can now compete for a front-rank position on world markets.

Apart from the technical beauty of the prints, the weight of the fabrics — new prints at 60 grams are on the market now — and the impeccable taste of the designs are truly remarkable. Some of these have been adopted both for piece goods and for kerchiefs to be worn with the dresse — a new source of inspiration for the couturiers! The range of colours in which the same design can be obtained is chosen with such skill, that very careful examination is required to see that two apparently quite different fabrics are, in reality, printed with the same motif. And that is a professional secret!...

Zurich silk weavers have always entertained the most friendly relations with other important production centres and the major markets of the world; this fact enables them to play their appointed role and to maintain the position they have won.

R. Ch.

\* See: *Swiss Textiles* No. 4/1946, p. 46 and No. 2/1947, p. 54.



*La soie a toujours été le tissu noble, qui vêt les grands de ce monde comme les dignitaires de la pensée. Manteau royal - robe du mandarin - toge de docteur. C'est une toge de gros grain comme celle que nous représentons ci-dessus, que portait S. M. la Reine d'Angleterre lors de la cérémonie au cours de laquelle elle reçut le grade de docteur honoris causa de l'Université de Johannesburg.*

*Silk has always been the fabric of kings and princes, of dignitaries and powers: the royal robe, the rich dress of the mandarin, the thinker's toga. When H. M. Queen Elizabeth received the degree of doctor honoris causa of the University of Johannesburg, she wore a thick Grosgrain gown, similar to the one illustrated above.*

*La seda ha sido siempre el tejido noble que sirve para vestir lo mismo los grandes de este mundo que los dignatarios del pensamiento. Mantos de corte reales - traje del mandarin - toga de doctor. Una de estas togas en Grosgrain, como la representada arriba, era la que ostentaba S. M. la Reina de Inglaterra durante la ceremonia en cuyo transcurso recibió el grado de doctor honoris causa de la Universidad de Johannesburgo.*

*Schon immer haben die Grossen dieser Welt und die Vertreter des Geistes sich in den edelsten der Stoffe, in Seide gekleidet. Königsmantel und Gewand des Mandarins, die Toga des doctor, sie alle sind aus Seide. Eine Toga aus Grosgrain Seide, wie die oben abgebildete, trug Ihre Majestät die Königin von England während der Feier, an der ihr der Titel eines Doktor honoris causa der Universität Johannesburg verliehen wurde.*



**Heer & Cie S. A., Thalwil.**

Gros grain majestueux pour robes d'après-midi et du soir et autres vêtements (voir page précédente).

« Gros-grain Majestueux » for afternoon and evening wear or garments for other occasions (see previous page.)

Grograin majestuooso para trajes de tarde y de soaré, así como para otros vestidos (véase la página anterior).

« Gros-grain Majestueux » für Nachmittags- und Abendkleider und andere Gewänder (siehe vorhergehende Seite).



Tissages de soieries ci-devant **Näf Frères S. A., Zurich.**  
Crêpe Diana. Faille moirée imprimée.  
Crepe Diana. Printed moiré faille.  
Crespón Diana. Faya moaré estampada.  
Crêpe Diana. Faille moirée bedruckt.  
*Photo Lutz.*



**Emar S. A., Zurich.**

Crêpe de Chine en soie naturelle et crêpe de Chine lavable en soie naturelle.  
Pure silk crepe-de-chine and washable crepe-de-chine.

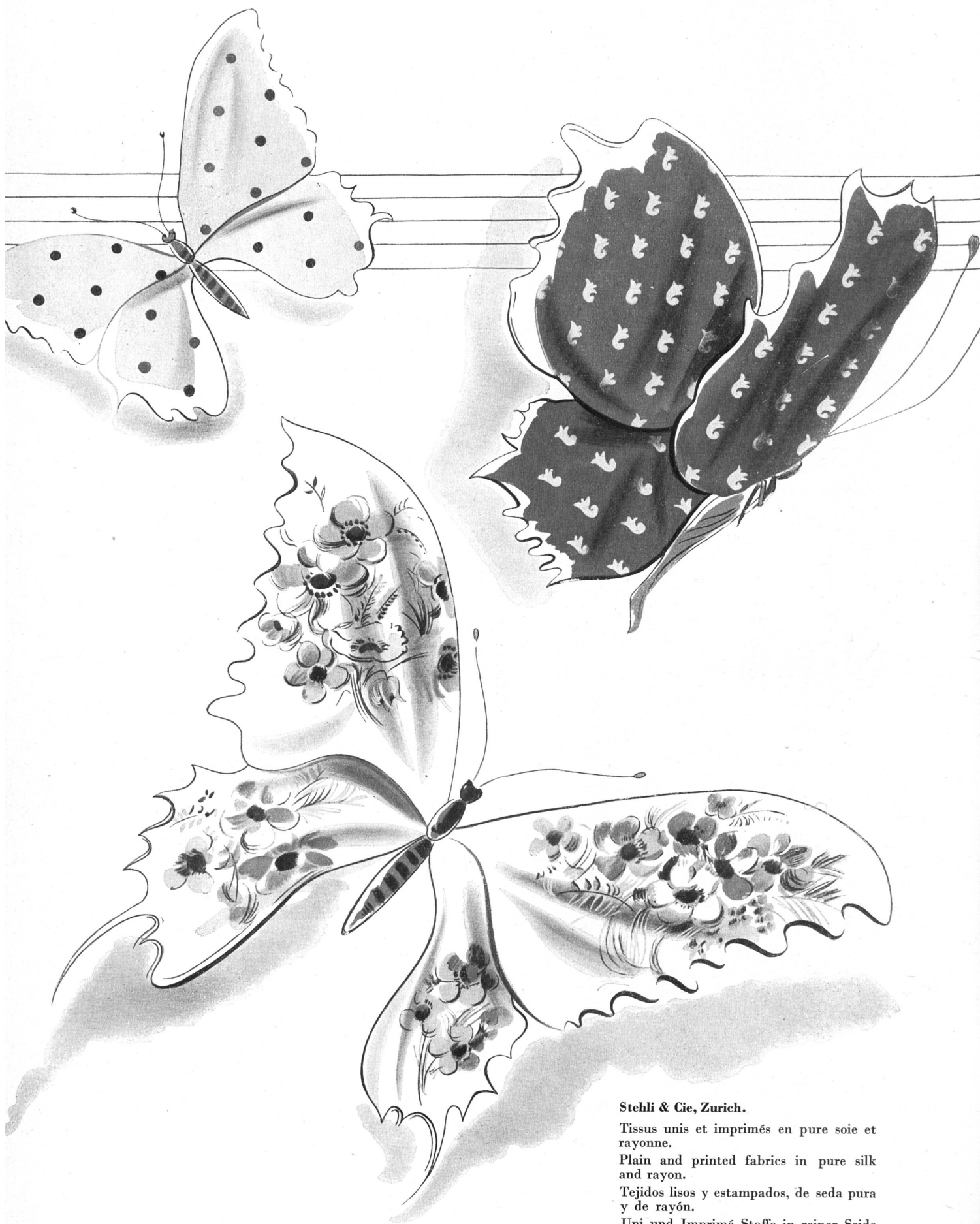
Crêpe de Chine de seda natural, y crêpe de Chine lavable de seda natural.  
Reinseidener Crêpe de Chine und waschbarer, reinseidener Crêpe de Chine.

*Photo de Jongh.*



Rudolf Brauchbar & Cie, Zu  
Nouveautés de la collection 1

WARZ



**Stehli & Cie, Zurich.**

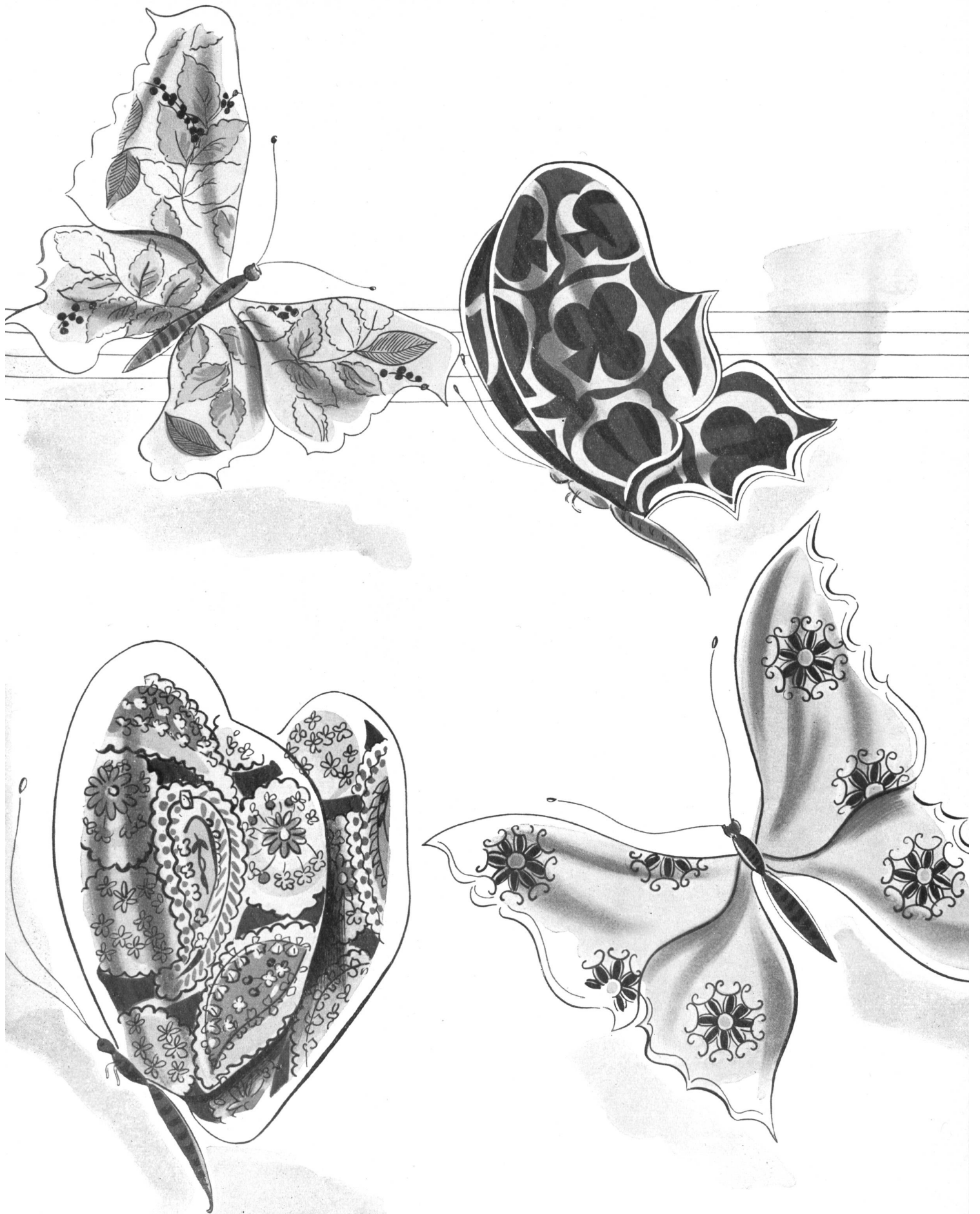
Tissus unis et imprimés en pure soie et rayonne.

Plain and printed fabrics in pure silk and rayon.

Tejidos lisos y estampados, de seda pura y de rayón.

Uni und Imprimé Stoffe in reiner Seide und Rayonne.





**Robt Schwarzenbach & Cie, Thalwil.**

Nouveautés imprimées sur crêpe mat rayonne.

Mat rayon crepe novelty prints.

Novedades estampadas sobre crespón mate de rayón.

Druckneuheiten in kunstseidenem Matt-crêpe.

*Atelier Theo Schwarz.*



**Bosshard-Buhler & Cie S. A., Wetzikon - Zurich.**

Tissus de qualité en soie naturelle.

Pure silk quality fabrics.

Tejidos de calidad escogida, de seda natural.

Reinseidene Stoffe allererster Qualität.

## *In the Silk industry*

In 1946, Switzerland's *consumption of raw silk*, estimated on the basis of import and export figures, was in the amount of 280,000 kilos or 160,000 kilos more than in the previous year. The consumption is therefore gradually rising to the pre-war level, about 350,000 kilos annually. Switzerland's chief supplier of silk last year was Italy but, in the course of the last six months of the year, arrivals of raw Japanese silk reached this country from New York. Brazil also supplied 22,000 kilos. The principal buyers of raw silk in Switzerland are silk and bolting-cloth weaving mills, hose manufacturers and silk sewing thread spinners.

In 1946, the Public Conditioning House in Zurich handled 285,677 kilos of goods: 189,841 kilos of raw silk, 60,940 kilos of silk twist and 34,896 kilos of fibres other than silk.

Swiss *rayon and staple fibre mills* were remarkably busy throughout 1946 and their output totalled 18,000 tons. The industry would require a further 200 to 300 hands in order to work to its full capacity. The number of operatives employed in this branch last year averaged 4,600. Official figures for 1946 are as follows:

	Import tons	Export tons
Raw viscose yarns . . . . .	414	1219
Staple fibre yarns . . . . .	569	628
Other raw rayon yarns (acetate, copper) . . . . .	134	3
Dyed yarns of all kinds . . . . .	1	162
	1118	2012

Following a ten-year trade depression, the export of *silk and rayon piece goods* revived in 1946 and figures were almost doubled, both as regards volume and value as compared with the previous year; a record peak of 5310 tons was reached, evaluated at 238 million francs. It is twenty years since statistics have been able to show anything like such results. Exports chiefly included rayon and staple fibre piece goods — 94½% of the total volume of exports of the industry, 83% of the value; silk piece goods represented 5½% in volume and 17% in value.

As regards manufacture, rayon fabrics hold pride of place, although staple fibre fabrics have also become quite an important item and good quality piece goods of this type have sold well on both the home and foreign markets. The sale of silk goods also increased, especially towards the end of the year, because the rayon output was insufficient to meet the demand. Natural silk is therefore slowly regaining the place it had lost of late years, an excellent sign for the Zurich silk industry which has for centuries enjoyed a world-wide reputation as a producer of silk goods. In this respect, it is interesting to note the increase in the production of scarves and squares. Swiss neckwear fabrics have always been reputed as excellent. Mention must also be made of umbrella fabrics which are also an important item in the trade, together with soft furnishing and upholstery fabrics. Prints remained in vogue for summer wear and the beauty and sumptuousness of Swiss collections were a tribute to the high degree of development of the weaving, dyeing and finishing industries. As far as can be foreseen, the present outlook seems to point to excellent results for the current year; the demand is certainly not diminishing and many orders still remain to be executed.

The manufacture of *bolting-cloth* was baldly hit by a raw material shortage during the first six months of 1946, but a revival set in during the latter half of the year and demand increased steadily. It is true that all Switzerland's former markets for this speciality product have not yet been regained, but it has nevertheless proved possible to renew old business connections here and there, and the industry is now working under more normal conditions.

The interesting facts summarized above are drawn from the 1946 Annual Report of the *Zurich Association of Silk Manufacturers*; the report in question gives an extremely detailed survey and was presented at the 99th Annual General Meeting of the Association.