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THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

Progress, speed, the frenzied rhythm of new inventions of synthetic, mechanical and magnetic products, all contribute to the rapid transformation of the way of life and the manners of a whole planet.

Whether passing from the Old World to the New, whether flashing across the sky in « Constellations » or ploughing the oceans in freighters, there is evidence everywhere of the same dynamism — unknown to our elders — which is speeding up and transforming ordinary everyday life in all countries and in every latitude.

And yet, the more things change... the more they are the same!

Spring, summer, autumn, winter continue to tread with unhurried step the stately round of their procession, with the same effects of bright or sombre settings spaced along the whole course of the twelve months. In nature, each season contributes to the pageant with its flowers, its fruits, its foliage and its curtains of mist.

In fashion, each season continues to repeat its parades of dresses like opening petals or slender stems, its fabrics soft as peach-skin, its colours taken from the forests of October, its snowy laces and its enchanting fairy-princess gowns for winter balls.

The more things change... the more they are the same!

Every five or ten years great trumpet blasts herald such proclamations as: « The reign of silk is over! — Down with cotton! — Away with sheep and real wool! — To the museum with linen, befitting only An-

cient Greeks and Pharaohs! » And it seems as though all the old natural fibres are going to vanish from the scene of fashion and be replaced ever after by all kinds of synthetic fibres, more worthy of the Atomic Age.

And we wait; and sure enough, from year to year, rayon finds its place on the fabric counters, the versatile nylon glistens on every woman's legs, then becomes a fabric and a lace, a hose-pipe for the garden or an unbreakable window-pane. Viscose, films, plastics, Fortisan, Vynion, etc., etc., are new words appearing in the world of textiles. Every new discovery of a synthetic fibre seems to herald the approaching death of some old and respected natural fibre. Which will be the first to disappear from the clothing industry? Will it be cotton, silk, wool or linen? — But no, it is a false alarm every time and the greater the number of artificial textiles invented, the greater the demand for the old natural fibres. On the other hand the population of the globe is increasing, and the more women there are in the world, the more dresses are needed, and the more caprices there are to be satisfied. In the end one does not know what to invent!

Thus, the classic textiles of other days, which sometimes have to defend an existence threatened by so-called scientific progress, occupy their usual and seasonal place every year.

And so this year once again there is a veritable triumph of cotton throughout the whole American clothing industry. Town wear, dresses for the country, beachwear, bathing costumes, evening and dinner gowns, lingerie and embroidery of all kinds, are all made of cotton. Although the Victorian fashion has had its day and there has been a return to more modern trends, broderie anglaise, batistes, romantic organdies, shirtings, voiles, fancy vaporous or silky fabrics of smooth closely woven cotton made of long fibres — are to be found every-

where, and are right for every occasion, for the country club as for the office, for the beaches of California as for the town.

If cotton fabrics, new fancy prints or classic materials have managed to maintain their prestige in spite of the appearance and wide diffusion of so many practical and attractive synthetic fabrics, it is because with the progress of science they have made improvements too: longer raw fibres for spinning, more efficient finishes for fabrics and faster dyes for colours. Cotton has adapted itself to progress and has made clever mixtures with rayon and nylon to create charming novelties.

It is this modernization and this perpetual renewal that make Swiss fabrics especially appreciated. They are found wherever superior quality, an original design or something special is needed. It is the same with silks which are being used so extensively both in the 1950 winter collections and those of the following summer. For the evening, this thousand years old fabric has taken a place of honour. Swiss silks from Zurich are making a remarkable contribution to the best collections, in spite of unfavourable conditions. Quality triumphs over competition and finds its place wherever quantity is not of greatest importance. It is thanks then to their quality that textiles such as cotton, silk, linen or wool, which seemed as though they should disappear with « progress », continue to reign supreme in the fashion.

Whatever the fluctuations therefore of a more or less uncertain market, whatever the advantages offered by new fibres created by science and not by nature, there will always remain a place of honour for fabrics imported from Switzerland, whose quality pleases women of taste, to-day as yesterday.

The more things change...

Thérèse de Chambrier.