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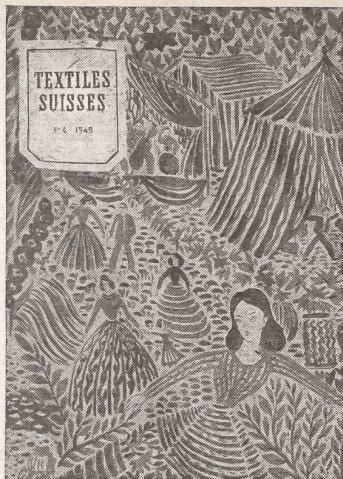
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« Village Festival »

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The history of footwear through the ages

The first men were not slow in discovering that the ground is hard and that the soles of the feet are very quickly worn away. From there it was only a step one might say, to thinking out a means of protecting the one against the other, a step which was soon taken.

The first footwear was undoubtedly made of the skin of an animal or the bark of a tree : a piece of wood roughly attached to the feet.

Necessity had been met ! Luxury soon made its appearance and occupied a large place.

The Hebrews and Egyptians took the lead. The Hebrews even went so far as to bear under the heel of their footwear the name or the portrait of their loved one, engraved on a piece of metal, so that when they walked they left its imprint on the ground... A proof of love and a continual promise of fidelity... unless perhaps a symbol of the frailty of this very love, traced in the sand.

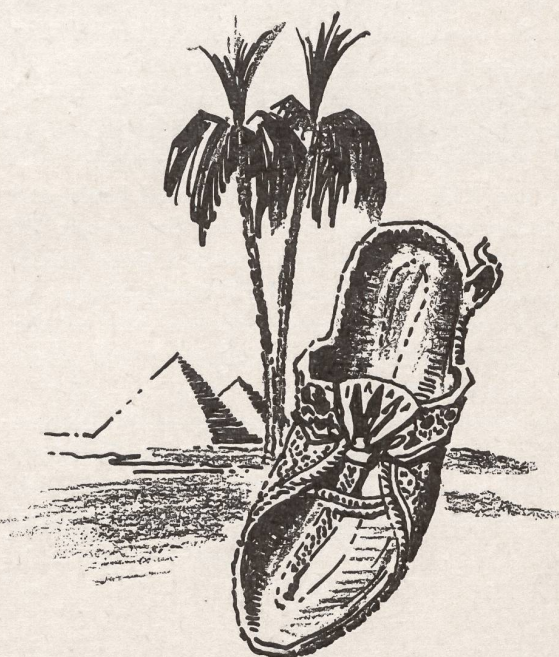
With the Romans, as with the Greeks, the art of shoe-making was carried much further. There was a great variety of shapes, each having its own particular purpose and social significance.

Rank and fortune could be recognized from a person's shoes alone. The stranger strolling in the streets of Rome had only to lower his eyes to learn the quality of those he met.

All the most unbelievable refinements were introduced by the wealthy, especially for women. Shoes

were adorned with pearls and embroidery and, according to Virgil, light boots were trimmed with gold and amber. The leather was plunged in the most costly dyes. Shoes were seen glittering with ornaments of chased silver ; others sparkled with precious stones, and solid gold was used for the soles !

The shoe rose to be considered as a real jewel, accessible only to the most privileged and wealthy.





It had risen so high... something had to curtail its sumptuous extravagances. The invasion of the barbarians put an end to this ostentation.

In the 11th century, the progress made in shoe-making was appreciable.

The 12th century saw the advent of shoes lined with felt, and riding boots.

Shoes became richer and still more elegant in the 13th century. This particular elegance became manifest in the lengthening of the shoe to a point, thus making the foot appear finer. This fashion soon degenerated into extravagance with the famous «poulaine», the shoe with the long pointed

toe of greatly exaggerated length derived from the babouches of the orientals.

These eccentricities, especially among the great nobles, became such that councils and royal decrees intervened, and forbade them! But the attraction became all the greater and these long pointed shoes all the more fashionable.

They even went so far as to become so long that the toes had to be picked up and tied to the knees with golden or silver chains every time anyone wished to be able to walk.

In the 15th century, shoes made entirely of leather came to stay. The long pointed toe gave way to broad-toed shoes decorated with slits giving the most original effect.

The 16th century saw the arrival of our « platform » sole in the form of a « patten » shoe. It was a very high shoe on a wooden sole as high in the front as at the back and clumsy in the extreme, but by one of those sudden fancies which govern fashion at certain periods, it seems to have been quite popular.

With the 17th century, slightly raised heels and sumptuously embroidered braids for the women fill us with admiration. The men adorned their ankles with cascades of ribbons called « butterfly wings » or « windmill sails ». The colour matched that of the costume and contributed to forming a whole effect of very rare elegance.

In the second half of the century, court life became much more intense and even more elegant. The heavy Cuban heel was superseded by the platform sole (already...). It was hollowed out, arched and raised, and

in the 18th century it led to the Louis XV heel. For uppers, embroidered fabrics were the most popular.

The famous Louis XV heel dominated the beginning of the 18th century; the shape of the shoe was still pointed, the last of the Gothic influence.

In the middle of the century, with the sumptuous displays at Versailles, the choice of materials and the lightness of line both of the shoe and the heel characterize the elegance of this period. At the end of the century, there was a surfeit of luxury. Shoes were embroidered, narrow and long, and the height of the heel was sometimes so exaggerated that women had to rely on the support of tall walking sticks to steady their uncertain gait.

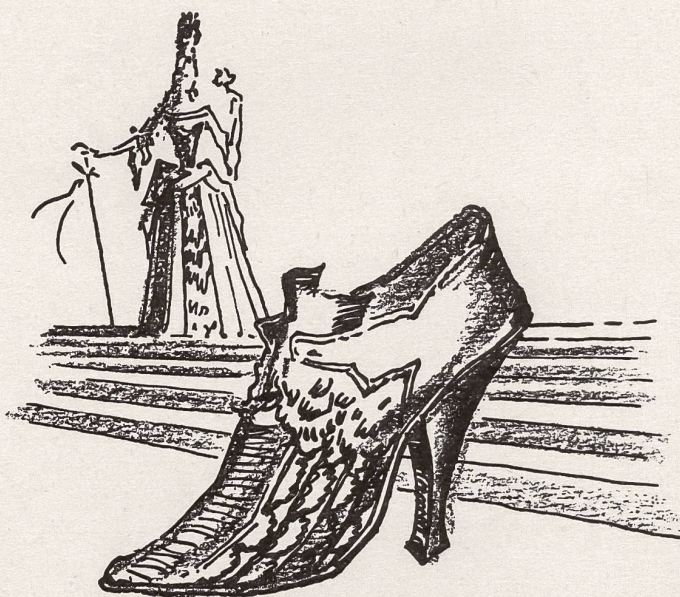
At the time of the Revolution and the Empire, the return to the simplicity of the ancient Greeks brought a calm contrast and heels were done away with.

The Restoration and the reign of Louis Philippe was the period of the happy medium, influence of a slippered bourgeoisie.

During the Second Empire and the Third Republic, industrialization made rapid progress in all directions.

The year 1851 saw the foundation of C.F. Bally's footwear factory at Schönenwerd (Switzerland). It met with great success and the factory was launched on its successful career.

Three low shoes made about 1875, which are among the oldest models of this firm, are still kept in the Bally Museum.



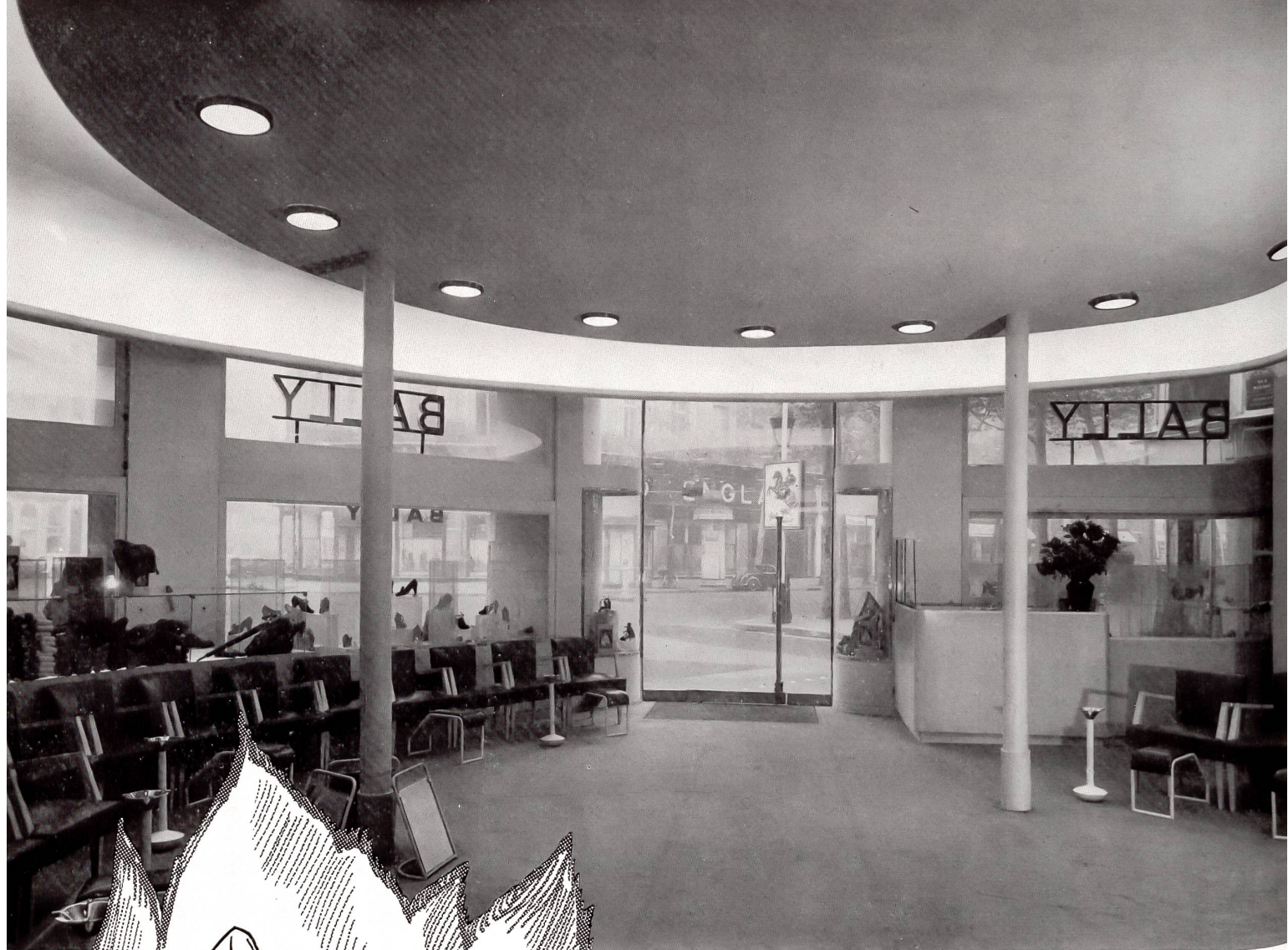
La chaussure,
un élément important
des échanges franco-suisses



« La Cordonnière » - Imagerie galante

Les dernières
créations

BALLY - Modèles déposés.



Au centre de Paris, le nouveau magasin des Capucines.



BALLY - Modèles déposés.

And here we are at the end of the century : in 1880, shoes began to be decorated with designs stitched in white thread. Shapes became pointed, and richly embroidered elastic-sided boots remained the most fashionable footwear.

The period 1900 - 1910 saw the predominance of the pointed, elegant shape. The adornment was the very clear reflection of the style of the period.

1919 - 1921, high boots of light glacé kid with cloth uppers, the shoe with the ankle strap, the court shoe and shoes with straps.

1923 - 1924, braided shoes. Predominance of black or patent glacé kid, and appearance of brown kid.

In 1925, the Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris brought with it the fashion for natural coloured kid.

1926 - 1927, braided shoes and light walking shoes ; popularity of the low Cuban heel.

In 1928 - 1929, reign of the Louis XV heel.

1929 - 1930, low-cut Lamballe with straps and the fancy high Richelieu or laced boot.

1934 - 1935. Appearance of the Gillie shoe.

1941 - 1946. Wartime. There were shortages of everything and particularly of leather for soles ; it was the reign of the wooden platform in classical and fancy models. In this field, the ingenuity and taste of the creators managed to make the best out of nothing and to give their customers, ever seeking after elegance, some real finds of which some remain minor works of art even to-day.



In 1948 - 1949. A return to fine shoes, and in 1949 Italy inspired the fashion of sandals with light soles and fine straps.

Here, passed rapidly in review with the strides of a seven-leagued boot, are some of the landmarks of a great tradition, thanks to the magnificent collection of old models in the Bally museum. And the story goes on, successful modern production continuing to offer creations suited to the tastes and the needs of our time.

Bally footwear, continuing this great tradition have, after important transformations, just opened their main branch in Paris, in the Boulevard des Capucines, between the Opera and the Madeleine.

The opening of this splendid shop took place on the 5th October, in the presence of an interested and admiring crowd, among whom were recognized personalities of the diplomatic world, the Arts, Haute Couture, fashion and many artists of the Parisian stage, who had all come to pay tribute to the Bally trade mark.

The new shop is like one vast lounge, bright and gay, in fresh and pleasing colours. Within this gracious setting a choice of charming things is set out before our admiring gaze, which will adorn Christmas trees and overwhelm all those who are near and dear to us during the New Year.

It is perhaps the moment to recall that this ornament of the Swiss export industry owes its origin to a small pair of shoes that the attentive Mr. C. F. Bally brought back to his wife after a visit to Paris in 1851. The author of this article hopes he will be forgiven for revealing this delicate and very personal fact here. We thought it permissible to quote this as a striking example of a great accomplishment, born of a small detail, of a gift, of the joy obtained by giving pleasure to another.

G. D.

