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SWISS TEXTILES IN THE TROPICS



In the vast field of the fashion industries, the « atmospheric » factor predominates, all powerful, and influences the march of events. Every season there is a tendency towards adapting fashion to the climate or, at any rate, to the temperature. The weather of course just does as it pleases and disconcerts the most far-seeing. The last two seasons in Brazil have just passed in such a manner as to baffle everyone. After the opening of the autumn-winter season, when so many collections showed a tendency towards the adoption of a fashion more suited to the country, the sun continued to reign supreme and the temperature did not drop at all, much to the confusion of the fashion houses who were at a loss to know what to offer, what to sell or what to think. In Europe, what woman would hesitate to choose her winter wardrobe simply because it was still fine, the cold weather being bound to come? As we have seen, the tropics are more deceptive. It is only now, when September should again be heralding the beginning of a warmer season, that the cold is making a tardy appearance. So all the new collections are ready, but with them too a great part of the previous stock regrettably remains. The shop windows offer the most extraordinary contrasts. One of the greatest fashion houses is opening the summer season, while next door the winter season is being brought to a close. One ray of sunshine and bared shoulders immediately assume a beautiful golden tan and are seen in the crowds side by side with the little woollen dresses that the less courageous have not yet dared to discard.

In all this confusion however, there is one line that has predominated. The straight skirt miraculously asserted itself in a few weeks. The streets are one continuous procession of close-fitting sheaths, accompanied by every conceivable combination of floating panels, overskirts, front or back décolletés and uneven hemlines, the greater to startle masculine eyes. Once the Brazilian woman decides to adopt a line, hesitation is no longer tolerated, and she soon makes up for lost time by showing that there are no limits to her imagination.

Some eight thousand miles from Paris, the Brazilian capital has discovered an attractive means of bringing its adaptations together and proving its possibilities. Every week, since the great ocean-going liners took to the seas again, those serving South America during their stay in Rio afford so many occasions for reunions, accompanied by cocktails on board, which are in no way inferior to the most well organized Private View, theatrical first-night or Grand Prix. It is on these occasions that the important part played by Swiss textiles may best be appreciated. In these cosmopolitan gatherings where fashions and interpretations of such widely different origins can be compared, it has to be recognized that the contribution made by Swiss industries plays an ever more important role.

However, there needs to be a relaxation in the very severe restrictions limiting imports of silks and other Swiss fabrics to Brazil. Unfortunately, neither Brazilian importers nor consumers have any cause for rejoicing. For a time, as yet undetermined, these

articles will be limited for us to already existing stocks. However, we are pleasantly surprised each month when we see how much greater they are than we had thought.

Luckily the great tourist movement of to-day has shortened distances and placed Brazil within easy reach. It is largely thanks to this that the novelties of Swiss production reach us and, although not finding a place on our markets, are nevertheless present to maintain the admiration that Brazil has always shown for Swiss textiles.

Fred Schlatter.

