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THE TIE, KNOT OF ELEGANCE

by R. CHESSEX, *Editor of «Textiles Suisses»*

The tie — and we have no intention here of going back to the time of the Romans who also knew it, nor to the time when it was a lace jabot — was for a long time nothing more than a strip of fabric, a black or white ribbon knotted more or less artistically around the neck. The oldest Swiss tie manufacturers — perhaps not quite a century ago — manufactured these admittedly rather dreary-looking accessories, ties of white piqué for ceremonial wear and various models in black silk, the lavallière for the artist, the plastron of the dandy and the bow-tie of the bowler-hatted bourgeois. For it was the great period of the bourgeois, not of Balzac's but of a more advanced type who had benefited by the «conquests of science». Such was the position at the beginning of the century. Then there were four years which gave a great push to the wheel... It was the end of boots with cloth uppers, and colour found its way at last into men's wear — timidly at first, then at an increasingly rapid pace.

To-day, in spite of certain anarchic tendencies in clothes, the tie is still the only touch of bright colour allowed in the town clothes of the correctly dressed man. And there are some men who, fully aware of the value of this privilege, choose their tie each morning with as much care as if it were the most important act of the whole day.

To be sure there is no lack of choice, even if one limits oneself to creations of good taste, disdaining certain loud abominations. Whatever the tendencies, the popularity of a certain colour rather than another, of a certain kind of fabric, of a certain way of tying the knot — loose or tight, large or small — there is always a school of good taste, of restraint, balance, choice, in a word, of elegance, to which Swiss tie manufacturers adhere.

Naturally, in order to carry on their industry, they need fabrics and these are supplied to them by old established firms specialising in this line. But the tendencies, qualities, designs and colours are generally indicated by the tie manufacturer who is in constant touch with his markets and knows what is in demand.

Swiss tie manufacturers, who are mainly found in Geneva and Zurich, therefore exert a decisive influence on Swiss tie silks which are so well known for their quality. Together with plain, figured and Jacquard silks, silks with stripes, silks with classical or fancy designs, they also use prints on twill which are of somewhat later origin. More recently still wool made its appearance in this field, in colour woven fabrics and also in prints, and there seems to be no reason to think that it will cease to be used. The actual making of the tie is an operation on which the quality

of the finished article naturally depends, and it is important for it to be carried out by hand, but the main task in this field is the creation of collections and designs.

After the war, exports of ties had assumed fantastic proportions on account of the shortages existing on many other markets. Then after returning to more normal proportions they were hampered by restrictions of all kinds. To-day they have resumed their regular course, in particular as a result of the recent liberalising measures taken by various countries.

