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Autor: Chessex, R.
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SCARVES AND SQUARES, FASHION ACCESSORIES

by R. CHESSEX, Editor of «Textiles Suisses»

The manufacture of printed squares used not to be a very important branch of the textile industrie. These «kerchiefs», born of the calico industry, were mainly articles for barter. The classical cashmere types were also produced in Switzerland in cotton for the home market, but they were not novelty articles. During the course of the last few decades however, squares for utilitarian purposes and popular use particularly were introduced into the field of fashion; and with fashion renewing itself at an ever increasing pace, they became much sought after accessories on account of their elegance and their gay note which add the finishing touch to a woman's outfit and enable it to be varied so successfully. The popularity of sport has made them accessory «musts» for skiing, the beach, camping, driving, etc.



Besides the manufacturers who have been printing for several generations already and who are the oldest producers of squares, several firms, among them some handkerchief manufacturers, have taken up, exclusively or otherwise, the manufacture of this article which is at the present moment an outstanding speciality of the Swiss textile industry and an important export article.

Squares are made of fabrics of all kinds, but silk and wool are the two most highly appreciated. Together with prints which are popular at the present moment, figured stuffs and Jacquard damasks are also made, principally in the traditional styles which are still in demand and in scarves, for the scarf has come back into favour these last few winters and is being worn again; classic wool scarves for men and women, plain or tubular prints, novelty scarves, scarves in figured silk which — when white — are the inevitable finishing touch to a man's evening wear.

In the prints, producers must establish extremely rich and varied collections in order to be able to meet the very varied desires of their foreign clients, but they are used to this for the Swiss market itself, in spite of its limited size, is a veritable mosaic of different tastes in this respect. They are well served in their task both by the excellence of the Swiss fabrics used — whether of cotton, staple fibre, rayon, silk or wool — and by the quality of the printing — whether roller, block or screen. The value of the printing is the result not only of the perfection of the machines and instruments used and the care taken by the workers in the execution of their work, but also of the use of excellent modern dyes, which give remarkable results of brightness and fastness.

The great progress made in recent years by the Swiss squares and scarves industry, and the popularity of its products in Switzerland and abroad, do not mean that the manufacturers' task is simplified in any way. The choice of styles has to be great, for it must be possible to provide not only classical cashmeres but the most modern designs, including «conversational» subjects etc., which are always in demand on one or other of the markets of the world. As all flights of fancy as permissible, creators must possess as much taste as imagination to be able constantly and successfully to create afresh and to know how to make best use of the fluctuations of fashion, the themes and trends of the moment and the repetition of old motifs, while remaining within the bounds of good taste and putting to the best possible use the technical means at their disposal — and even by discovering new ones. Hitherto, performance has always fully come up to the promises made previously — and we have no reason to believe that this will not continue to be the case in the future.