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ABOUT RIBBONS... AND ABOUT THE SILK RIBBON INDUSTRY

by the Swiss Silk Ribbon Manufacturers' Association, Basle (President: Dr. Alfons Burckhardt)

What price does the victor ask for his victory? What is the reward for valour? A red ribbon, a green ribbon, a blue one, a ribbon alongside others in a row on a hero's chest, a narrow ribbon in a button-hole or the wide sash worn only by kings! The parchment of the prizeman is decorated with a ribbon. The seal of the Empire hangs at the end of a moiré ribbon; and a gaily coloured rosette is attached to the ear of the winning horse.

Ribbons that are sold by the yard as all things essential, as arable land and railroad tracks!

Ribbons that festoon the cradle. Bows at the mother's breast — blindly clutched at by tiny seeking hands. Ribbons in little girls' hair — the first of seduction's wiles.

Flounces at the first ball, the sheen of sashes, the streamers of fluttering banners, the inspiration of a dress or an ornament in the hair. Ribbons in pigtaails and ribbons for multicoloured cockades. Ribbons for christenings, ribbons for weddings, the handle of a vanity bag, the loop holding back a curtain.

A ribbon keeps for a little while longer the secret of an admirer's gift. It is the bow on a bouquet or the decoration on a box of chocolates.

Around a hat it draws forth compliments and admiration.

It is the trimming on a glove and the edging of a coat. It is the ruffle at the neck and the bow on the bodice, the reason for the buskin, the rosette on the bedroom slipper and the delicate bow tying the night-gown.

Four pieces of ribbon and the scene is set, four pieces of ribbon and we have a charmer, four pieces of ribbon and the party is on!

Whether of faille or of velvet, of satin or taffeta, whether in bright colours or delicate shades, the ribbon is the final touch bringing out the true value of all things. Wherever it is found it creates an atmosphere of indescribable poetry.

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In the 17th century the manufacture of silk ribbons in Switzerland ceased to be a craft and became industrialised. It rapidly grew in importance and during the 18th and 19th centuries became by far the most important of the industries of Basle. Gradually the circle of its clients extended to the five continents.

In the early days production was carried out by piece work in the home, and this is still practised today in five cantons. Later on with technical progress, manufacture in factories became far more important. The silk ribbon industry is located in the cantons of



the north-west of Switzerland and has its centre in Basle.

It has been exporting its products for nearly four centuries now. It is understandable therefore that these products are known throughout the world and count among those which have established the reputation for quality of Swiss workmanship. The manufacturing programme includes silk and rayon ribbons, from the richest and heaviest luxury ribbon to the articles of ordinary everyday use, in a variety which makes it possible to meet the most specialised requirements. Let us mention among other things ribbons for men and women's hats, for dressmaking, for men and women's ready-made wear, for lingerie and corsets, for decoration and packing, for wreaths and flowers as well as ribbons for technical purposes such as insulating tape, typewriter ribbons, etc. The specialities of this industry include ribbons of taffeta, faille, satin, velvet and moiré, ribbons with checks and stripes as well as woven labels. The dyeing and finishing of ribbons is particularly carefully carried out. The Swiss silk ribbon industry is able to meet all requirements both as regards quantity and delivery dates.

The following are the principal reasons for the indisputable superiority of its products :

1. The collaboration of highly qualified technical and commercial cadres, thanks to a centuries' old tradition with regard to manufacture and export.
2. The technical development of the auxiliary industries, particularly that of dyeing.
3. Continually modernised mechanical equipment.
4. A man-power associated with the ribbon industry, in most cases for generations, which loves its work and goes in for quality by atavism, and to whose

professional training manufacturers have always devoted and still devote all their care and attention.

The effects of these four causes enabled the silk ribbon industry to adapt itself successfully about the year 1920 to working with rayon and to survive the upheavals brought about by changing fashions in women's hair styles and the difficulties of the war and post-war years. The principle of quality, which Swiss ribbon manufacturers have made a rule, explains why « Basle ribbon » is appreciated the world over, and is a guarantee for the future of this typical branch of the Swiss export industry.



THE STRAW BRAID INDUSTRY

by A. ZWAHLEN, President of the Association of the Millinery-Braid Manufacturers, Wohlen



The hat braid industry of Aargau has achieved world-wide fame in its own particular line, although its development has never equalled that of other famous Swiss industries. Its products are to be found in hat factories and milliner's salons all over the world. And yet the general public is hardly aware of their existence, for they do not appear on the market in the form of finished products, but in the semi-manufactured state.

In Paris, London and New York, when Madam pays a visit to the milliner's to buy a new spring hat, what matters most is that her new acquisition should be a reflection of the latest Paris fashions. As a general rule she hardly gives a thought to the name of the manufacturer and still less to the origin of the raw materials. It is for these reasons that in the glittering world of fashion the Aargau braid industry remains somewhat in the background. However, although behind the scenes, its role is none the less important.

Plaited hats made their appearance in Switzerland in the middle of the 17th century. It was a modest beginning — craft work carried out in the home — before becoming a great industrial activity on an international scale, centred at Wohlen, a small market town in the canton of Aargau.

If we still speak of the Aargau « straw industry », it is because in the early days rye straw was used exclusively in the making of braid by hand in the home. But things have changed since then, not only as regards the raw materials used but also the methods of work. After other natural fibres had been adopted for plaiting such as raffia, cotton, silk, hemp, horse-hair and various bark fibres, synthetic products with a cellulose (rayon) base began to be plaited just before the first World War. Furthermore, the mechanisation of Switzerland's industries, which had been taking place at an ever increasing pace since the 19th century, also affected this branch and caused the making of straw braid and other work done by hand to fall off considerably.

Nevertheless work done by hand, whether in the factory or in the home, continued to have a certain