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Youth of St. Gall... Ever Youthful Cotton and Embroidery



A tradition that is not constantly renewed by young blood is doomed. Tradition is meaningless therefore unless it is continually brought up to date and made to come to terms with the present. The cotton and embroidery industries of St. Gall have several centuries of tradition behind them; but they have not lost touch with youth, a youth which is not only that of the sophisticated graces of fashion, but the youthfulness of the blood, and the heart, the youthful spirit that pulses and thrives not so much in the fashion houses and designers' workrooms but in

the streets of the town, on the playing fields, in the schools, the youth of lovely young girls with long plaits and rosy cheeks...

Every other year, the industries of St. Gall get together with the young people of the town. It is a festival of youth, celebrated in the month of July just before the holidays begin. All the schoolchildren of St. Gall from seven to eighteen take part and parade through the streets on their way to the festival ground. But what is particularly charming in this event is that everyone is wearing white. All the girls are dressed in white, all are clad in embroideries and fine cottons. For once it is not in the workrooms of Parisian couturiers that these dresses are designed, that these broderies anglaises, printed organdies, mousselines and embroidered voiles are sewn and cut. The family seamstress, the mother, big sister or a friend are set to work; or the girl herself, skillfully plying her scissors and needle creates this party dress out of the most fabulous of fabrics, those worn by princesses and movie stars on gala occasions. What charm, what innocence in this procession of happy youth, in this healthy, spontaneous outpouring of joy, untouched by sophistication.

On a beautifully sunny day last July, some eight thousand schoolchildren paraded through the streets gaily bedecked with flags, climbing up nearer the blue sky to the festival ground on Rosenberg hill, to give themselves up wholeheartedly and without a care in the world to the pleasures of dancing, singing, games, merry-go-rounds and other simple amusements.

And all these girls in their white embroidery dresses, the boys in their white cotton shirts went off on holiday taking with them the memory of this happy day, when the sun and the sky smiled down on their youth.

No other industry is so closely bound up with everyday life, with the life of the town and its population, as the fine cotton and embroidery industry of St. Gall; no other inhabitants take as much interest in the prosperity and the future of their industry. It is these reciprocal relations of mutual interest, of friendship even, that give life and youth to the industrial tradition of St. Gall, that give it the power to renew itself continually.

