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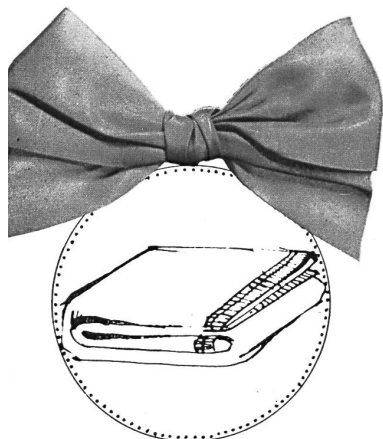
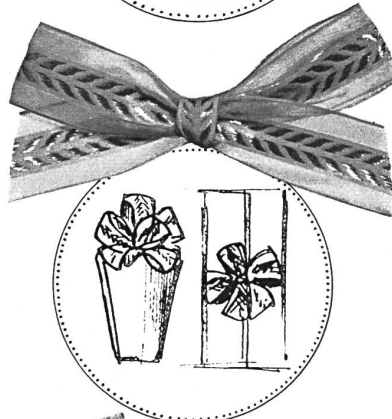
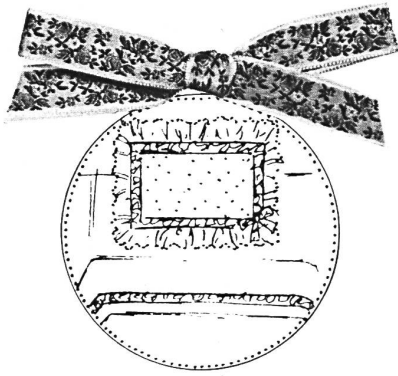
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SILK RIBBONS



Mention silk ribbons to a Swiss and he immediately thinks of Basle. Since the end of the 14th century, this attractive city on the Rhine has been the veritable home of these articles, being the first commercial centre for their production.

At one time, the ribbon firms went in almost exclusively for the cottage production of passementerie, but as it gradually became more and more difficult to recruit workers for this job from among the young, the manufacturers built a number of small modern concerns, in the country, to try to offset to a certain extent the shortage of manpower.

In this daring transition from a centuries' old tradition to entirely new methods of manufacture, one recognizes the objective optimism and the enterprising temperament of silk ribbon manufacturers. Experienced technicians and men of the trade are continually endeavouring to perfect the ribbon-weaving looms and the machines required for the preparation and finishing. Swiss silk ribbon manufacturers know very well that they will be able to keep their ability to compete on the international level only if they remain firmly attached to the traditional Swiss principles of the highest possible standard of workmanship and quality. Consequently it is not at all surprising that Swiss silk ribbons, by their reliability, beauty and diversity, in short by their superior quality, are able to stand comparison with the best work of foreign competitors.

Since 1954, the annual turnover of the Swiss silk ribbon industry has remained fairly constant, in spite of the many currency restrictions and exorbitant customs duties levied by certain countries. Exports oscillate in value between 11.8 and 13.9 million Swiss francs per year. For many years now, this industry's biggest buyer has been the United States of America. The Republic of South Africa, Canada and Australia are also important overseas markets. The increase in exports to EEC and EFTA countries is particularly gratifying.

The most important export article is the velvet ribbon. North America is its biggest buyer and puts it to all sorts of uses. It is used for attractive bows on the indispensable little veiled hat as well as for the hair, pretty touches on woollen jackets and dresses, as well as for interior decoration. The range of colours is continually being brought up to date by the addition of the latest shades, so that it is possible in this respect to satisfy the most varied demands. Ribbons for interior decoration, confectionery and floral arrangements are particularly popular. Certain manufacturers devote all their attention and all their creative gifts to this speciality, which is used to add an aura of glamour and beauty to boxes of chocolates and luxurious looking Easter eggs. Swiss ribbon hair bows differ from all others by their ever-changing attractive designs, and they are as pretty and becoming in the frizzy hair of a little dark girl as they are on the tails of milk white Swedish thoroughbreds. Gold lamé jacquard ribbons are all the rage now for interior decoration, as well as floral brocaded ribbons that do not spoil when washed and are thus ideal as original trimmings on dresses, blouses and flimsy nightgowns as well as on bed and table linen. Among the qualities of everyday ribbon, let us mention the satin and velvety ribbons for lingerie, grosgrain for the millinery industry, ribbons for edging woollen blankets, manufacturer's labels and industrial ribbons, especially typewriter ribbons and ribbons for electrotechnical uses (insulation).

The silk ribbon is a typical Swiss export product linking Switzerland to the whole world, with its thousand and one gaily coloured strands.