

The cotton industry plays an important role in the field of fashion

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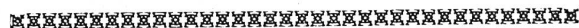
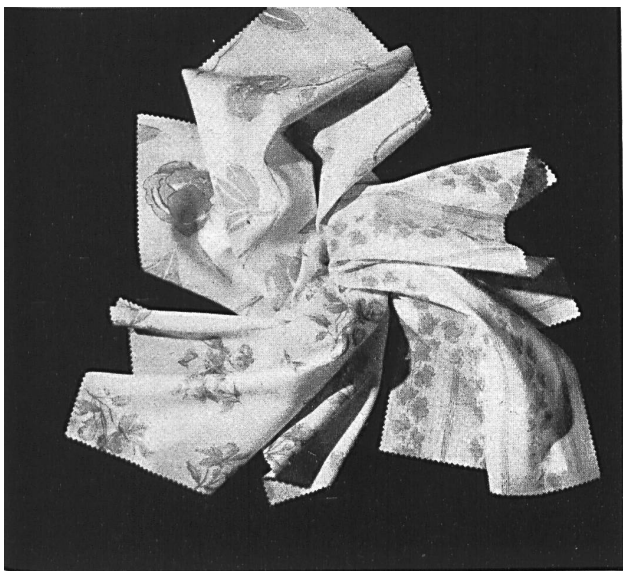
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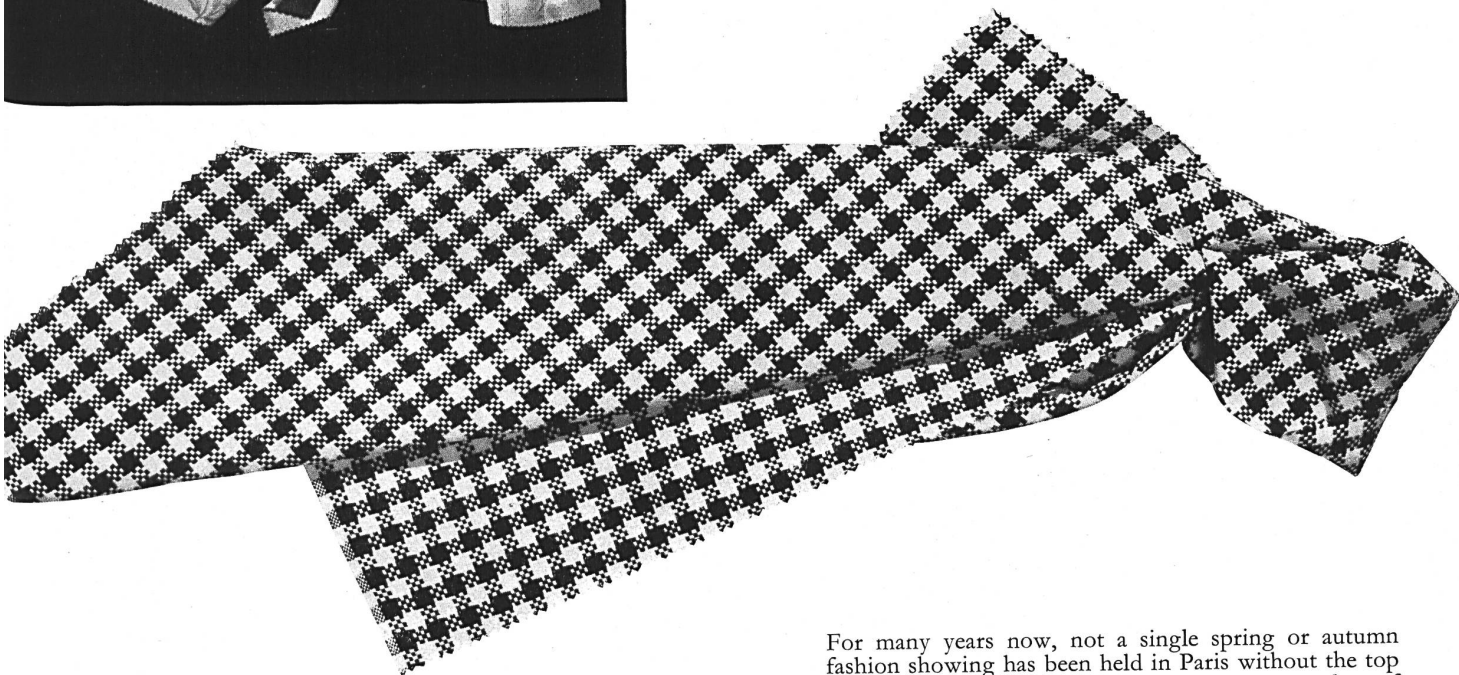
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THE COTTON INDUSTRY PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE FIELD OF FASHION



For many years now, not a single spring or autumn fashion showing has been held in Paris without the top couturiers featuring in their collections a number of dresses made of St. Gall embroidery and lace. This fact alone would suffice to show the prominent position Swiss cotton products enjoy in international fashions. But embroideries are not the only product that bears witness throughout the world to the extraordinary creative talent and professional skill prevailing in the Swiss cotton industry. The manufacturing programme of this economic group is very varied and has an extremely long list of specialities, which have made a name for themselves in the most varied fields. We would like to describe here the contribution the Swiss cotton and embroidery industries have made to the manufacture of clothing and lingerie. In addition to the manufacture of fabrics, embroideries, handkerchiefs and various kinds of braid, ribbons and trimmings, it also holds a strong position in the field of furnishing fabrics and household linen. Let us also mention the cotton fabrics for technical and special uses, such as, for instance, fabrics for the manufacture of footwear, fabrics for filters, tents, travel bags, etc.

Recent examples have shown that Swiss products can become established even in countries which manufacture similar articles, provided Swiss manufacturers do not try to beat their competitors by offering the lowest possible prices but remain specialized in the better qualities. In this respect, a radical change has occurred in the Swiss cotton industry during the past twenty years. Until the end of the second world war, *cotton fabrics* played a very secondary role in Switzerland compared with embroideries on cotton. The finest qualities, mousseline and organdie, were used above all as grounds for embroidery. Today, Swiss cotton fabrics with excellent finishes appear on the international fashion scene on an equal footing with embroidery and are being used with increasing success for the creation of afternoon dresses, suits and evening dresses. In the field of children's wear, as well as fine night attire, these cotton fabrics are continually appearing in new forms. What is more, now that they have gained admittance to the realm of high fashion, they are also



sweeping all before them in the field of swimsuits, sports and leisure wear and even the much more conservative field of men's wear.

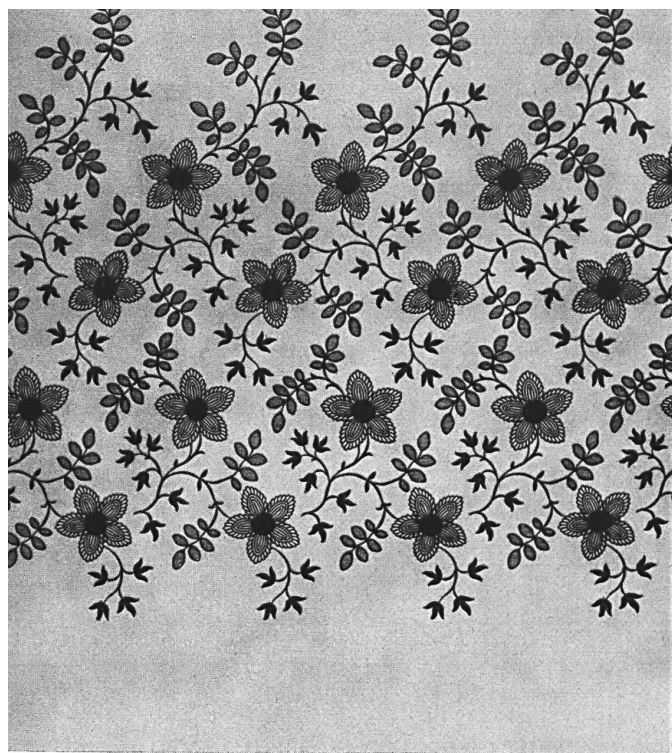
It is thanks to the work of weaving experts, chemists and fabric designers that cotton has been able to gain access to the world of fashion. The use of special yarns, new weaving techniques and new finishing processes has made it possible to modify totally the character of cotton fabrics, giving them a softer or more resilient touch, a mat or shiny look, making them shrink-resistant, practically or completely crease-resistant, water-repellent, shape-retaining, resistant to stains and dirt, quick-drying and non-iron. The work of artistic creation, hitherto confined to embroidery, has now been extended to the field of fabrics, where high novelty designs of all types satisfy the requirements of fashion designers.

The range of cotton fabrics comprises practically all the current qualities. Especially popular for the summer are the fine flowing fabrics, from gossamer-thin voile to light crêpes, twills and soft imitation shantung. These delicate articles are made not only for feminine fashions: double voile in long staple cotton as well as fancy brocaded fabrics are much sought after in warm countries for the manufacture of men's shirts that are light yet strong enough to resist tearing. For a long time now fine batiste has been the favourite fabric for fine lingerie. But specialities such as bark crêpe and cotton batiste mixed with « Helanca » are also used; both these fabrics are particularly resistant to creasing, and consequently require very little ironing. The second of these fabrics, which is made mainly of cotton, also stretches slightly. The range of lingerie is completed by various fancy fabrics with attractive woven effects. Heavier cotton fabrics with a silky look are generally used for smart pyjamas and négligés. Swiss organdie, which has already been mentioned, is used in the manufacture of blouses as well as children's dresses. This season, Paris is launching white collars, bows and ties made of this fabric.

Cotton satin, faille and moire are very striking fabrics much used for evening dresses. One of the present favourites among the structured fabrics is piqué, which couturiers have adopted for two-piece outfits, afternoon and evening dresses. Like organdie, it is also used for making dainty collars and trims for dark dresses. At the same time as piqué, a cotton ottoman has also been promoted to the ranks of haute couture fabrics. In addition, cotton reps, tweed and grosgrain are as popular as ever for novelty suits, two-piece outfits and coats. All the linen-type fabrics are also great favourites today with fashion designers. In plain weaves or in colours, they dominate women's fashions for the afternoon and sport as well as the men's leisure shirt sector. With regard to beach fashions, let us also mention the recent use of terrycloth, whose rough tufted look helps to make very original models.

Cotton velvet have been rediscovered; cotton gabardine is also one of the fabrics favoured by fashion, being widely used for women's, men's and children's clothing. Another classical cotton fabric is poplin, which reigns supreme in the manufacture of blouses and shirts and is continually gaining ground in the field of afternoon clothes and beachwear. Specially finished, it is also widely used for rainwear. In spite of the heavy competition from synthetic fabrics, specially impregnated poplins are always in great demand for raincoats, jackets and stylish anoraks. Mention should be made of the special effects obtained with clipcord Jacquard fabrics, dotted Swiss and openwork weaves. The variety of cotton fabrics obtained by weaving is multiplied still further by the use of colours and designs. Each season, cotton fabrics are produced in a host of new fashionable colours, whether plain, colour-woven or printed. Highly perfected dobby looms for colour weaving are used for the production of numerous striped and checked motifs, while the Jacquard looms turn out designs with softer outlines. In the field of prints, the possibilities are now practically unlimited. The technique of printing cotton fabrics has reached such a high standard that the various coloured surfaces, whatever the degree of fineness and shading, are rendered with the most extraordinary fidelity. Consequently well-known painters have become enthusiastic collaborators in the production of exclusive cotton printed fabrics. They provide water-colours, lithographs and engravings which, reproduced edge to edge, make very original fabrics for dresses. The perfection of the printing technique does not however free manufacturers from the responsible task of selecting designs and colours. Capricious fashion bestows her favours for but a season on certain colours





and designs. Swiss exporters of cotton fabrics are well known abroad for their keen awareness of what will be required in the near future. They have a flair, it seems, for discovering whether fashion will favour floral or paisley designs, quiet or bold colours, small or large designs. For this purpose, the contacts they maintain with the world fashion centres, and especially Parisian haute couture, are indispensable to them.

It is in the field of *embroidery* that cotton fabrics and yarns undergo the most extraordinary changes. In view of their vast numbers, it is practically impossible to give the reader even an approximate idea of all these wonders. The popularity — which started at the end of the war — of St. Gall embroideries with fashion designers, still goes on. Couturiers make lavish use of laces and embroideries in all fields from the simple little day dress to the gala evening gown, as well as from beachwear to sports outfits.

First of all, let us mention Schiffli embroideries which are found either in the form of clusters or entirely embroidered allovers, self-toned or in contrasting colours, muted or bright.

Broderie anglaise on fine cotton batiste or on organdie is known all over the world and, for many people, represents the typical St. Gall embroidery. It is an article continually in demand for summer blouses and little girls' or teenagers' dresses. Imaginative designers at present tend to use embroidery, braids, bands, insertions, pompons and fringes to create the most original models. The St. Gall embroidery industry produces all these, from the smallest ornamental motifs to the largest floral designs and foliage, in all combinations.

The precious cut-out embroideries and etched embroideries, which demand a certain skill and knowledge not only for their manufacture but also for their use, are particularly popular in haute couture today. In the best known fashion centres, they are used for making lovely cocktail or evening dresses, generally deliberately quiet in style but giving a special elegance to those who wear them. The glamorous effect produced by these embroideries is no mere matter of chance. It is the result of a great deal of imagination and technical skill, impeccable mechanical execution and specialized work by



hand, all of which is not immediately apparent. What woman ever stops to think that her lovely guipure dress with its complicated motifs is made up of a great number of small pieces of braid fitted and sewn together by skilful seamstresses or that the countless asymmetrical holes in a cut-out embroidery have each been made, one after the other, by hand. Recently, string embroidery has come back into fashion, both in allover or in the form of guipure, thanks to its raised effect.

Let us mention another speciality that has never been dethroned — bridal gowns in St. Gall embroidery, whether in organdie, batiste or delicately embroidered voile, in satin with heavy applications, in chemical embroidery or guipure.

In addition to their main task of supplying embroidery by the yard and in the form of trimmings, Swiss manufacturers of cotton fabrics and embroideries are always trying out new ideas, designed to simplify the work of making up. In this way, for example, a number of automatic looms have been made for weaving special widths, so as to reduce fabric wastage to a minimum in the cutting of coats. Men's shirt manufacturers need no longer waste time putting tucks on the fronts of evening shirts. In Switzerland, special fabrics are manufactured for the purpose, in which the tucks or ornamental designs are added during weaving, in dimensions suited to the use to be made of them. The work of blouse manufacturers is simplified in the same way: from the embroidery manufacturers they can purchase blouse fronts, i.e. Minicare finish fabrics that are embroidered in exactly the right places to give the maximum effect to the finished blouses. Similarly fabrics for entire dresses are decorated, along one selvedge or both, with embroidery edging, which considerably simplifies the cutting of dresses. This brilliant idea has also been very widely used for cotton prints. Prints of this kind, known as panels, are put on sale with large designs arranged so that they form the complete back or front of a dress, skirt, bodice, etc. The accessory pieces too, such as pockets and flounces, are specially printed. For the maker-up, being able to use these fabrics adapted to special ends, it represents an appreciable saving of time and money, for in one operation he can cut out garments with an individual trimming, thus reducing fabric wastage to a minimum. Another interesting speciality is the manufacture of fabrics with the same designs on different qualities of ground, making it possible, for example, to use the same print for a shantung suit and a voile blouse.

We cannot bring this survey of Swiss cotton production in the field of fashion to a close without mentioning those dainty and attractive accessories — *Swiss handkerchiefs* — those ambassadors of St. Gall industry throughout the world. Like gay butterflies, wherever they appear they add a touch of fineness and gaiety. It is not surprising therefore that in the last fifteen years these popular accessories have succeeded in conquering the world. Although very varied in type, they are all outstanding for their daintiness and exclusive fashionable appeal. Let us mention in particular the clipcord handkerchiefs, those with satin bands or with a gauze weave. All these styles are popular not only with the ladies but also with men, in larger sizes of course and with quieter designs. Who is not familiar with the pretty printed handkerchiefs in batiste, those little squares of fabric, as light as a breath of wind, decorated with attractive scenes, floral motifs and animals? Some of them are even printed with horoscopes, kitchen recipes, telegram forms, town plans, songs (music and words) and an incredible number of other humorous or amusing subjects. There are also embroidered handkerchiefs with pretty coloured motifs, made on hand-operated machines or decorated with precious guipures. Small Swiss handkerchiefs originally intended for use as pocket handkerchiefs or red handkerchiefs for lipstick have since been used for many other purposes.