

The strawbraid industry

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THE STRAWBRAID INDUSTRY

Such is the name still given to the Aargau millinery braid industry, although today most of the braids are manufactured from most diverse and, in the main, synthetic raw materials.

The industry dates back to the middle of the XVIIIth century and has grown from a modest, local home-craft into a widely ramified and mechanized manufacture, of which Wohlen is the chief centre. However, apart from the tens of thousands of spindles which, in the busy season, often fly night and day under the supervision of skilled workers, several hundreds of diligent craftsmen still work in their homes whenever the current fashions call for fine, handwoven products which cannot be machine manufactured.

At first, straw was the only raw material employed in the millinery braid industry. Connoisseurs know what masterpieces were created in the old days from this coarse, primitive material... All lovers of beautiful things still enjoy perusing ancient sample books of these products and admire those delicate, dainty straws, so often produced with most rudimentary tools.

The discovery of viscose provided the industry with a wealth of new raw materials, many of which were, and still are, adopted. Apart from synthetic products, such as crinol or artificial hair, various types of cellophane, stiffened viscose ribbons, silky rayon and many others, plant fibres, such as hemp and ramie, were also employed. Unfortunately, the latter have become very difficult to obtain just now.

The strawbraid industry has had many difficulties to face of late owing to war conditions, but it is encouraging to note that many have been satisfactorily overcome. A number of manufacturers have abandoned the exclusive production of millinery braids and,



realizing that their machinery can be used for other purposes as well, have added to their schedule various lines of fancy braids for the shoe industry. These new lines will certainly prove fruitful even in the post-war period. The results of constant research in the domain of artificial fibres will provide the Wohlen industry with a number of novel materials extremely suitable for the manufacture of heavy, high-quality braids.

The strawbraid manufacture has always been an export industry, as the home market only absorbs about three-fifths of its output ; the remainder is sent to the four corners of the earth.

The war has unfortunately interrupted the close personal contact the manufacturers of this branch have always entertained with the dictators of world fashions. During the recent war years, executives have been thrown entirely on their own resources, but it must be said that they have found fruitful inspiration in the great fashion displays held annually in their own country.

Nevertheless, as soon as international relations can be re-established, there is no doubt but that strawbraid manufacturers will be among the first to visit their friends and clients overseas and renew those former ties.

BERNHARD DREIFUSS.

SCARVES... AND MUSIC

Novel kerchiefs, representing a dashing composition of fantastic birds and coloured notes, are highly distinctive in effect...

Against a dainty Rococo background a mandoline lying forgotten on a chair... design in white on purple ground.

Bold colour contrasts of a wine coloured scarf with musical instrument design : mandoline, violin, cello in emerald green and mustard yellow.

All these squares and kerchiefs are of pure silk.

The couturiers have used them as scarves or blouses, and in some cases have created with these materials, distinctive handbags and audacious turbans.

