

Linen

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LINEN

In Ancient Egypt linen was the symbol of divine purity and divine light, and the Gods loved linen.

Linen remained, throughout the ages, the distinctive privilege of gentility, and the Infanta Isabelle owed her fame to the durability of her linen under-garment, which she wore three years long, until her husband Robert had come from Ostend. And thereby set the fashion for unbleached linen, which never shows the trace of dirt.

Linen, today, is accessible to all who have a taste for culture and distinction.

In the last few years before the war, linen products were infinitely varied. The spinning mills made glad the hearts of weavers with all manner of yarns — fine, thick, mixed, smooth, raw, flaked and knotted. And still the basic fibres were woven from *linum utilissimum* in its distinctive, unadulterated, classical purity, or mixed with cotton and innumerable other textile fibres in order to provide the good qualities beloved of the middle-classes.

As linen from Flanders, Ireland and the Baltic States grew scarcer, Italian hemp was used as a substitute, a less delicate and supple material, but equally serviceable and resistant. And, as the raw material shortage grew, so did it become a greater joy to produce something good from the little at one's disposal. Much experience was gained thereby, yet many desires must go unsatisfied, until we can see more a plentiful output can place at the disposal of the weavers all such yarns as they can only dream of today, in their desire to make the world of fashion rejoice.

Apart from the yarns which form the basic materials of the woven fabrics, the binding and structural processes in the manufacture of finished goods are of primary importance. Just as a strongly built house cannot be made without good bricks, so no fine weave can be obtained without good yarns. And now comes the craftsman who, according to his inspiration and knowledge, strives to create the Best, so that, by complete surrender to the materials in his hands, he may create something New and Good. And it is often very difficult to conceive warm summer days when winter gales are blowing, or, in the midst of a desolate landscape, to imagine a gay, colourful Lido or bright garden. Nevertheless, the Spring returns at last. In April ne'er shed a clout, in May shed what you will, in June go linen-clad. And so, as every year Spring blooms afresh, we succeed in finding new structures and new colours, so that the Gods, whom we love, may choose therefrom.

For many years past, apart from white and unbleached linen, coloured linens also have been produced. The application of fast colours is an art which has, for years, been perfected in Switzerland, thanks to the excellent dyestuffs of Basle. The finishing of linen fabrics consists entirely in enhancing the good, natural properties of the filaments, in rendering them soft and supple and in maintaining their natural, silken lustre.

Linen has retained its symbolical value for centuries, and no other synthetic fibre can ever supplant it. For this reason, let us not lose trust in the future, but cherish this priceless natural fibre. The time will come again when we shall once more be able to choose from a wide and abundant range of materials. Then shall linen be hailed victorious and, in the peaceful rivalry of nations, ever new and more splendid weaves shall be created which, despite their novelty, will be reminiscent of that land which is the eternal source of human culture, where Isis, who first inspired the cultivation of flax, was adored; where all who served the Gods were clothed in the immaculate purity of linen, and where the wearing of white linen garments first foretold the coming of Christian prayer and penance.

WILLY BRAND,
Managing Director of the "Atelier de Toile de Langenthal S. A."

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Laces with highly stylized musical designs.

But embroiderers have not been content to exercise their art merely on delicate, ethereal fabrics; they have also used heavier materials, such as linens, crêpes, staple fibres and cottons. Some of these are printed with bold designs and re-embroidered with other fanciful patterns.

Staple fibre, cotton and pure silk prints are dashing and original.









