

The men's clothing industry

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underwear manufacturers are therefore obliged always to be well informed of the developments in Paris fashions as soon as possible in order to be able to use this inspiration in the creating of their own collections.

At the head of this group of industries we find the women's clothing industry which mainly produces coats and suits, blouses, aprons, dressing gowns and particularly dresses, from the most sumptuous ball gowns to the simple little dress for everyday wear; this industry has achieved some remarkable results. We must also mention the manufacture of sportswear, the products of which, including raincoats, are always abreast of the latest trends of fashion which reigns in this field too. The manufacture of underwear is on a level with that of clothing; it is also divided into two sections: women's underwear and men's

underwear. Here too, Switzerland manufactures high-grade products whose international reputation is based on the extraordinary quality of the workmanship as well as on the taste shown in their cut and trimmings. It should be said in passing that the influence of fashion is becoming more and more marked in underwear for women and even for men. Besides these main branches, there is the manufacture of corsets, belts, brassieres, etc. which are always in great demand, as well as the manufacture of ties (see page 83). In addition to these, the Swiss clothing and underwear industry produces working clothes of all kinds, braces, garters, dress shields, etc. We shall not speak here of the products of the hosiery and knitwear industry (see page 80) and clothing for men (see page 82) which are the subject of separate articles.



THE MEN'S CLOTHING INDUSTRY

by Dr. H. WALDER, President of the Union of Swiss Manufacturers of Men and Boys' Clothing, Zurich

The development of the men's clothing industry in Switzerland goes back to the last two decades of the last century. The first firms founded in Switzerland were created by manufacturers full of initiative, who had learnt to know this branch thoroughly in Germany, at that time Switzerland's principal supplier of men's apparel. The adoption by a general vote on March 15th, 1903 of a new general customs tariff increased the interest felt in this new industry and encouraged its development. During the first few decades of its existence it was exclusively based on piece work in the home, that is to say the garments, already cut, were handed over with the accessories to tailors who finished them in their own workrooms with their own workers. This method has completely changed during the last thirty or forty years. To-day only a very small part of Swiss men's wear is produced in the home; most of it comes from factories using the division of labour system. A great number of factories have sprung up, particularly since the crisis of 1930, and they are equipped with the latest machinery and equipment and work according to rational methods, thus ensuring high quality production. While before the last war it was sometimes said that the Swiss men's clothing industry did not come up to the standard of foreign high-grade competition, these criticisms are no longer heard to-day and it is recognised everywhere that most Swiss factories make suits and overcoats which, with regard to regularity in execution

and quality of manufacture, are second to none. Great progress has also been made as regards style and choice of design. In the latter field the improvement is partly due to the Swiss weaving mills whose collections have become more abundant and richer in fancy fabrics, and partly to the fact that the Swiss manufacturer of men's apparel is much freer in his purchasing of fabrics than most of his foreign colleagues. Lastly, very strong competition, even a little exaggerated at times perhaps, has led to improvements in quality, for it is only with quality that the Swiss market can be conquered.

The figures for the number of workers employed by the Swiss men's clothing industry give a good idea of its importance. We must consider here the figures for the whole of the Swiss clothing industry, as the different qualities were not formerly specified in the statistics; these figures then also refer to the manufacture of women and children's clothing, to the lingerie, hosiery, knitwear and footwear industries, hatmaking, etc. The total number of people employed in all of these branches was 4,499 in 1882 and 60,739 in 1947. This figure places the clothing industries as a whole second on the list of Swiss industries as regards the number of employed, even ahead of watchmaking. In the figure indicated for 1947, 10,336 were employed in making men's clothing and uniforms, so that in the Swiss clothing industries taken as a whole, the men's clothing industry comes second, just after the footwear industry.