

The footwear industry

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type hat still remains even to-day the undisputed speciality of the milliner.

Swiss producers limit themselves to trimming and finishing hats, so it is only a question of the last stage in manufacture, the necessary material being mainly supplied from abroad. However we must not forget to mention Swiss braid and straw shapes (see page 86) which, together with felt hoods (see «Swiss Textiles» No. 2/1950, page 66), are very highly considered throughout the world and have always been a valued contribution to hat-making.

To-day women's hats are made in Switzerland in about a thousand milliners' workshops and some twenty factories, employing a little more than three

thousand people in all. With the passing of time this industry, which formerly used only to make copies, has broken free and begun to produce a very large proportion of its own models.

The tendency of women's hat manufacturers in Switzerland to draw their inspiration from the creations of Paris only in their main outlines, and to adapt them to the less exclusive tastes of their Swiss customers, has ensured their success.

The increase in the exports of Switzerland's women's hat industry recorded since the end of the last war opens up prospects which enable it to consider its present situation and its chances for the future with a certain optimism.



THE FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY

by Dr. O. A. ZIEGLER, Secretary of the Association of Swiss Footwear Manufacturers, Zurich

Switzerland's footwear industry, like «Swiss Textiles», is celebrating an important event this year; it is a hundred years since C. F. Bally added the mass production of footwear to the weaving of elastic fabric, which makes him the real founder of our industry. He certainly had no idea at the time of the difficulties he would have to face, nor of the great success which was to be his reward once he had overcome all the obstacles in his way. As the Swiss public was at first very suspicious of ready-made shoes, Bally was obliged right from the start to turn to markets abroad. After his first successes in South America, he was able to improve the quality of his

products considerably and then to gain a foothold in France first of all, and subsequently in England. Thus this concern made rapid strides during the lifetime of its founder (C. F. Bally died in 1899), and his successors have completed its development and made it into an important enterprise with worldwide ramifications and numerous manufacturing and sales branches abroad (to-day the C. F. Bally Holding Co. Ltd., established in 1921). The reputation enjoyed by Bally shoes all over the world to-day is due above all to the particularly high standards of design, materials, workmanship and service.

As a result of the general economic development, other enterprising men, following the example of Bally, soon turned to the manufacture of footwear. The foundations of the industry were really laid in the last two decades of the 19th century when most of the important footwear factories in Switzerland were founded. Among these let us mention in particular the firm of Hug, a very progressive concern, and the well-known firms Fretz, Loew, Strub-Glutz and Walder.

Switzerland's footwear industry has known periods of brilliant success as well as periods of crises and difficulties in its struggle for existence. The limitations of the home market, the consequent necessity to export and the threat of foreign competition are the decisive factors in its existence. About 1930 exports which had been prospering suffered a rude shock when the Swiss market was flooded with cheap foreign mass-produced goods. This occurred again after World War II and — home production being very highly developed — there was a glut on the Swiss market, with all the consequences that follow in its train. During the last two years imports into Switzerland have decreased and taken on more reasonable proportions. On the other hand, thanks to progress in the liberalisation of trade, Swiss exports have been able to recover some of their importance although they have not yet reached their pre-war level. The immediate future of Switzerland's footwear industry is dominated by conditions on the international leather and hide market and their repercussions on prices and supplies of raw materials.

