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Happy is the Success that has no History



Aerial photograph of the «Alpinit» factory at Sarmenstorf

Happy indeed is the success that has made the trademark «Alpinit» synonymous with Swiss quality, both at home and abroad, for — like those happy nations of the old proverb — it would appear to have no history of adversity behind it. This does not mean, however, that success has been achieved without any effort! The extremely favourable economic situation has obviously had something to do with it, but would have had no lasting effect without other important factors: perseverance, business acumen, careful study and sound knowledge of the markets, good taste and, especially, unswerving loyalty to the principle of quality.

At the start, in 1910, there was a small factory knitting outer garments, which very soon acquired a tradition and a reputation for quality: quality of raw materials, quality of workmanship . . . and the elegance of its creations. At the end of the war, the general need to replenish stocks prevailing in all countries, also helped considerably — but it helped competitors too of course. And so the time had come for a choice to be made, and the choice was to remain faithful to the traditions of good workmanship reigning in Switzerland. That is the story in a nutshell! The rest is incidental. Thus the clientele was built up, the factory expanded and the trademark became known far and wide.

Right from the start the firm had specialized to a certain extent: it makes no undergarments, and this voluntary restriction of its programme is a positive factor, especially in this day of labour shortage. The manufacturing pro-

gramme comprises only suits, skirts, pullovers and cardigans for women, and pullovers and cardigans for men. With a staff of about 300, the factory can be considered quite large, especially if one takes into account its specialization in high quality, attractively designed outer garments. For economic reasons too, the clientele is limited to ten countries including Switzerland, which absorbs about a quarter of the firm's production while the remaining three-quarters is accounted for by Germany, the United States of America, Sweden, Great Britain, the Netherlands, South Africa, Belgium and France. In spite of this limited number of markets, production has to be extremely varied, for tastes differ greatly from one country to another.

Mixed fibres are never used but mainly merino wool from Australia, as well as lisle and a certain quantity of Shetland and mohair. The articles are not piece-dyed but all knitted with yarn-dyed or even fibre-dyed wool and cotton. Most articles are decatized and consequently shrink-proof, and all knitwear made from animal fibres is «mitinized» to make it proof against moth.

The manufacture of high quality knitwear calls for other requirements, such as fulling, which gives woollen knitted articles great softness of touch, but also, and above all, the careful selection of the appropriate knitting machines.



Three-piece outfit with skirt and jacket in pure wool Wevenit



Smart blazer for men. Attractive pure wool knitted outfit for women: blazer, fancy striped pullover and slacks

Walking through this big factory, one sees a great many knitting machines of recent make, some of which are even electronically controlled. This variety of circular and flatbed machines as well as others for knitting fully fashioned articles enables the firm to adapt its production quickly to keep up with the often rapid changes in fashion. These machines, with their wide range of possibilities, can produce plain or Jacquard articles as required.

An interesting point to note is that these knitting machines are practically all operated by men, who are generally more suited than women to handling these complicated machines. The women, on the other hand, are employed mainly in making up garments. In this part of the production process, we notice in the first place that the knitted fabrics are not cut stacked in big piles as

is so often the case, but individually, which ensures much greater accuracy. This department also employs women for the very precise work of joining two knitted parts together stitch by stitch, without any visible seam. Finally — a detail of the greatest importance — some twenty members of the staff are permanently employed in checking the finished garments. During manufacture, at least fifteen minutes is spent checking each item, which means that all merchandise leaving the factory has been thoroughly checked for quality.

Nor let us forget that the work of creation naturally plays a big part too in maintaining the success of the trademark. The models are designed in the factory so as to be not only in the height of international fashion — as set by Paris and adopted by the other centres — but also eminently wearable, corresponding at the same time

- 1 Two-piece woollen outfit
- 2 Youthful pure woollen jacket

to the advantages of the material used, woollen or cotton knitwear, and the tastes of the different markets... A complex problem not easily solved but for which ingenious solutions have always been found, to judge by the growing success of this trademark.

These few short notes on the firm of *Ruepp & Co. Ltd.*, at Sarmenstorf, show very clearly that this is a firm that has remained true to its original principle of quality, which has won for the well-known trademark «ALPINIT» the loyalty of a large clientele, limited today only by the present manpower shortage.

René Cadet

1

2

Attractive Two-piece outfit in fancy knitted lisle

