

Letter from Marocco

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Letter from Morocco

The interest for the Swiss fabrics on this market

The fact that there are twelve million native inhabitants in Morocco to one million Europeans must be taken into account as soon as the question of textiles in this country is considered.

The native population consumes about 90% of the total tonnage of fabrics of European origin destined for the population as a whole.

For a long time now, Moslem women have been making use of Swiss embroidery, for they are very fond of light fabrics for the sheer dresses called *djinas* that they wear over their *caftans*. European style wedding gowns in embroidered fabrics are also becoming more and more popular. Let us add that Islam's traditional costumes are always made of many layers of garments — a sign of wealth. The Moslem woman, who only goes out veiled and then only if absolutely necessary, keeps her love of finery for the cool houses built around an inner court. Her long loose gowns come down to her feet which are slipped into *babouches*.

Before the war, the looms of Saint-Gall supplied Morocco with a great quantity of veils richly covered with embroidery in bright colours which seemed even a little loud and gaudy to our western eyes. These veils which are made of a white ground of loose texture are embroidered with glossy rayon yarn in gold, pink, yellow or blue.

The war, which temporarily put a stop to trade, gave Moroccans, who are very fond of bright colour schemes, the opportunity to discover the possibilities of printed cotton. Multicoloured flowers supplanted the padded satin-stitch embroidery and the raised embroidered corollas on voile.

Swiss embroidery was again in great demand after the war, but the evolution of the Moroccan market followed the general world tendency and Swiss industry must now supply cheaper veils with embroidery more spaced out, making it possible to reduce the cost of manufacture. Then again imports are coming up against not only the formalities of licensing and quotas but also the competition — made possible by the obstacles in question — of the embroideries of Caudry and Tarare, and even of embroidery made locally on looms from Saint-Gall and Cornely.

Among the articles imported from Switzerland and sold in the souks, let us also mention squares richly covered with embroidered flowers and bordered with long silky fringes which the Jewish women, who have evolved only slightly in the matter of clothing, still wear on their heads.

In this connection let us remember that in the word « evolution » is contained the whole gradual development of the costume of the autochthonous peoples and, consequently, to a certain extent, the development of the textile industries of these districts.

When wearing his traditional costume, the Moslem is a great consumer of fabrics, but evolution is pushing him ineluctably, either sooner or later depending on whether he lives in the town or the bled, towards European clothing. To consider only the

women (the sole consumers of Swiss embroidery in this country) we note that their costume is made up in the following manner: next to the body, a vest with sleeves; then a ladderproof undergarment of the knicker type, next a *seroual* or long puffed trousers. Over all this she puts a *caftan* or long high-necked dress with sleeves, this being covered in its turn by the *djina*, another dress, long too but of lighter fabric. This is what she wears at home. When going out, the whole is concealed either by a *haïk* a piece of white cotton six metres long by two wide worn by the peasant women, or the *djellaba*, a straight cloak with a hood, taken from the men's costume. The whole outfit requires from 15 to 20 metres of fabric, whereas the clothing of a European woman dressed for the street does not require more than half this amount, and even less in summer.

Westernised Moroccans, it seems, constitute a race of shrewd merchants. Perhaps they will only allow their women-folk to give up the national costume when they acquire not only a taste for the simplicity of European clothes, but also a taste for the multiplicity of its outfits and the well-known fondness of western women for changes in fashion. Failing which the Moroccan textile industry, whose different branches have developed enormously, would, as women evolve, risk seeing an important part of its outlets closed.

The market for Swiss textiles in Morocco already seems to be in advance of this general trend since its activity is mainly concentrated on the European section of the community. Fine cotton fabrics, launched in collaboration with high fashion houses in Paris, are in great demand here, as well as open-work embroidery, which — no one has ever been able to explain why — is called *broderie anglaise*.

The collections of the Moroccan wholesalers must be very varied, each retailer wishing to have his own exclusive models and the private customer turning her back, often for no apparent reason, on such and such a design.

Plain fabrics form the basic stocks, whether in poplin, nainsook, or plain and printed organdies. Finely striped poplins are very popular, as are also white cottons with woven tucks for blouses and flower-printed cottons for lingerie. Let us note however that the European woman does not want any fabrics that are too light, such as organdies, for her Moslem maids do not give them the careful attention they require.

Finally let us point out that Swiss textiles in Morocco, whether fine poplins or white *broderie anglaise*, or again curtaining fabrics in cotton voile or *marquise*, occupy a prominent position in the shop windows of the smarter districts as well as in the better known fashion houses.

Claude-Salvy.

Photo Mars



Danse berbère, tissus légers et brochés

Since the young Queen declared the Court out of mourning, the season has regained some of its traditional gaiety, and the fashion world, too, has received the fillip it needed. The Queen wore to her first garden-party a drifting, ballet-length dress of white organza, and a hat trimmed with lily of the valley; and everything she has been seen in since has proved that she has become a really elegant woman with as keen a fashion sense as her sister's.

We are all beginning to look forward to the Coronation, and this feeling of anticipation is reflected in the autumn collections. Hartnell, naturally, gave a lead here, most pronounced in two ball-dresses: *Fanfare*, billowing white tulle embroidered with silver feathers and a puff of real white ostrich feather on each side of the skirt; and *Brocade*, a classic court dress of silvered lilac, trailing a train from one shoulder. Another sign of the new Elizabethan influence is in the backward glance at the reign of the first Elizabeth. At Digby Morton's, especially, you see melon sleeves, plumed caps, a ruffed fur collar and a brocaded theatre coat which might have been copied from a Holbein painting. The age of another great queen is reflected, too, in the Victorian decoration which persists, particularly at Mattli: tassels, soutache and jet on velvet or flat fur.

The Collections on the whole were pretty and practical, designed to suit the busy life of modern society; above-the-ankle party dresses with their own jackets, day-dresses and suits made with their own top-coats. Yet, without departing from the established silhouette, most of the houses have introduced something new in the

REMBRANDT / BALMAIN
Black Givrine noppé gros-grain
from Hausamann & Cie, Winterhour

Photo Promotion features



MATITA
Shot blue and crimson
Swiss organza blouse

way of line, fabric or detail. John Cavanagh, for instance, who has been recently co-opted into the Incorporated Society of London Designers, has a new swan silhouette: skirt fulness swept to the back, collars set low so that the neckline may look longer, smooth, unstressed shoulders. Victor Stiebel also shows skirts with a back movement, giving prominence to the thigh-line. Skirts in general are a couple of inches longer, narrow or with restrained fulness gained from panels of pleats. About half the jackets are fitted and smooth waisted, half waistless and boxy, some closing in at the hem to hug the hips. Digby Morton and Stiebel have tweed suits with cuffs or whole sleeves of ribbed knitting. Lachasse sets great V-fronted stoles, or little matching kerchiefs on his suits, tops them with jelly-bag caps and turbans. Almost everywhere, the bosom is accented, and assumes a new importance; and there is a great deal of glitter, achieved with sequins, jewelled embroidery and streaks of gold thread.

Colours are charming. Grey can be said to have had its day; green is the new star — soft moss green, olive, dark holly and ivy, pale teal and blueish sea-green. Runners up are red and black, copper and sherry wine colours, pale caramel, black coffee and café-au-lait.

Everywhere, coats and jackets are trimmed or lined with fur. Instead of ubiquitous mink, you see nutria, sealskin, lots of Persian lamb, and a noticeable revival of moleskin, usually dyed to match the cloth. Fur collars are either set low on the collar — like Mattli's monastic collar, which can also be turned up to frame the face — or stand high and enveloping, like Ronald Paterson's steeple collar.