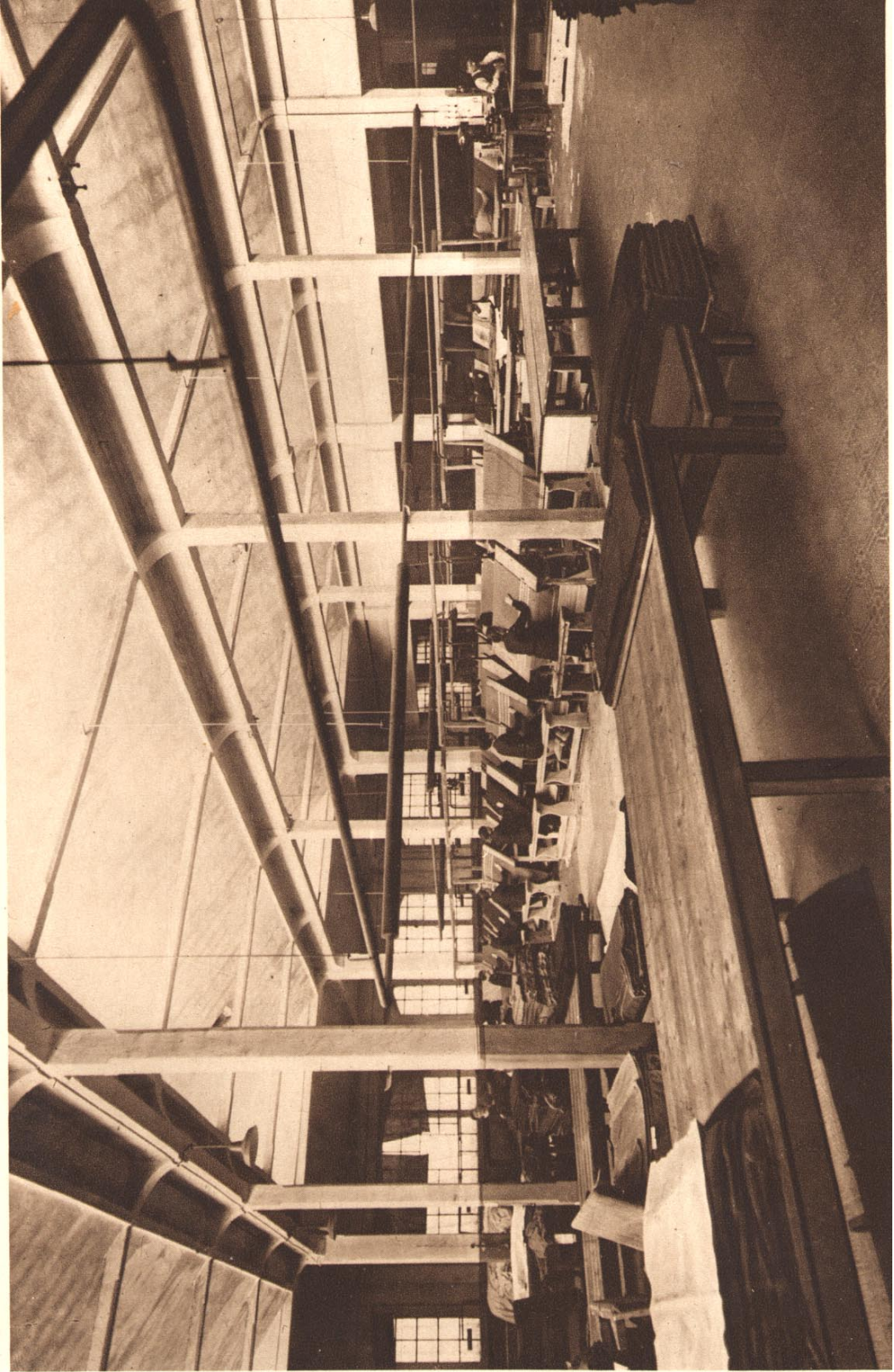


the task of other machines once more to brush this severely and meticulously educated disciple, who has to make a perfect debut after so many gymnastics and so much grooming, in order to avoid unpleasant surprises. Its dark shades must be able to resist the glare of the sun, and after its treatment with water and steam it must be proof against foul weather.

The moment of its presentation approaches. A last glance: it is now perfectly clean and in order, without a thread out of place, without a sign of a stain, without the least trace of negligence after its passage through so many contrivances and so many hands. It is folded between cardboard lengths, occasional lengths being heated electrically to distribute a mild temperature to the whole pile. It is during this operation that the cloth has to receive its glaze, a kind of brilliancy different from the shine which had to be avoided and which will one day re-appear in suits that have been too smoothed through use. The piece may now, at long last, be wound up, after having been re-measured and its weight checked with its length, and be given its paper wrapping and its ticket.

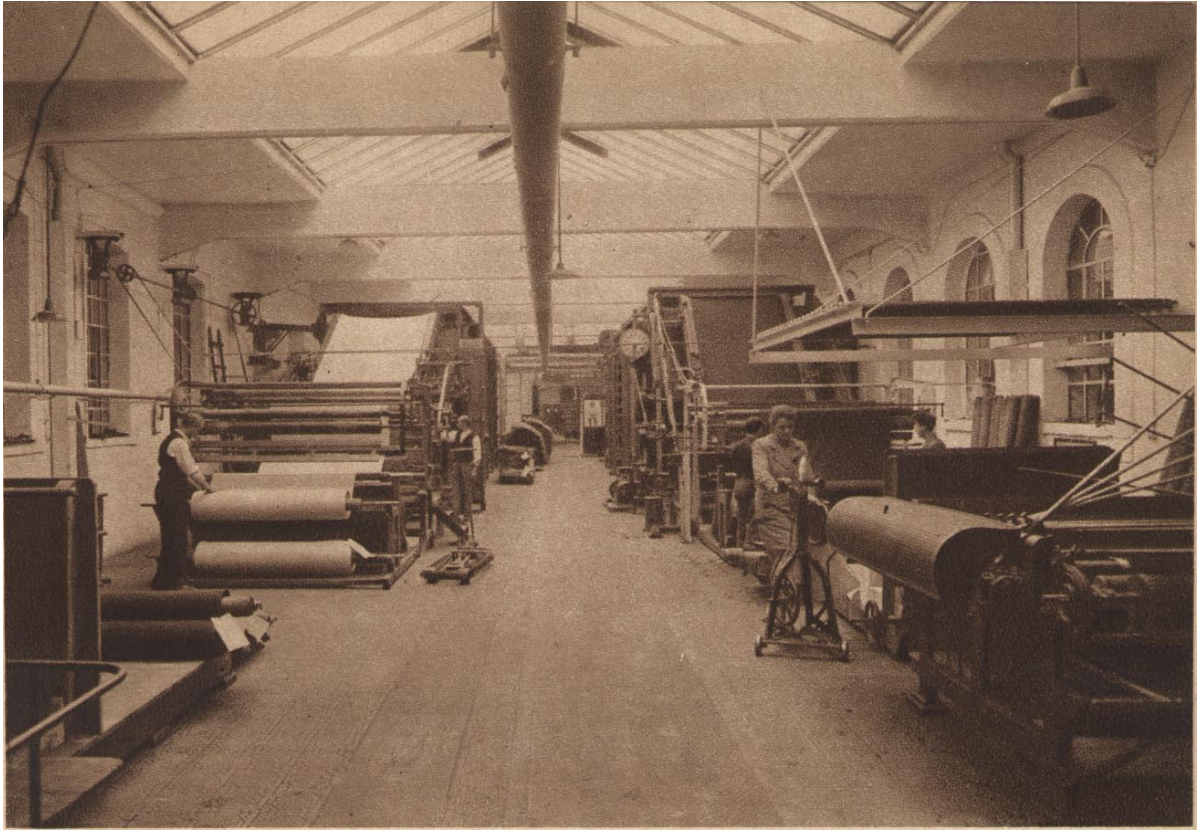
The throb of the engines is heard like the echo of a distant cascade. Here are only men and quiet and loose movements, not quasi-automatic as elsewhere, for this is the department of calculations, management and supervision. One recalls the glazed partitions, during the passage through the rooms, in that sort of sometimes tempestuous landscape, behind which, near to the machines yet away from them, were men who inspected the product in its evolution, cool officers on the field of battle. But the attention of the layman was diverted from the battle by the prodigies of force and velocity, by that kind of miracle whereby the fetid lock of wool, which by divers ways and with such energy of patience and such an ingenious variety of treatments, with such driving assiduity and an activity without cessation,



TWEEZING



EXAMINATION OF THE PIECES



A Room of Driers

was thrown into confusion, upset, trimmed, and refined — a veil of fibres in the ribbon, an intimate force in the apparent fragility of the twisted thread, a vitality that gains in strength the more it is worried, a cuirass of softness between blood heat and the heat of the world.

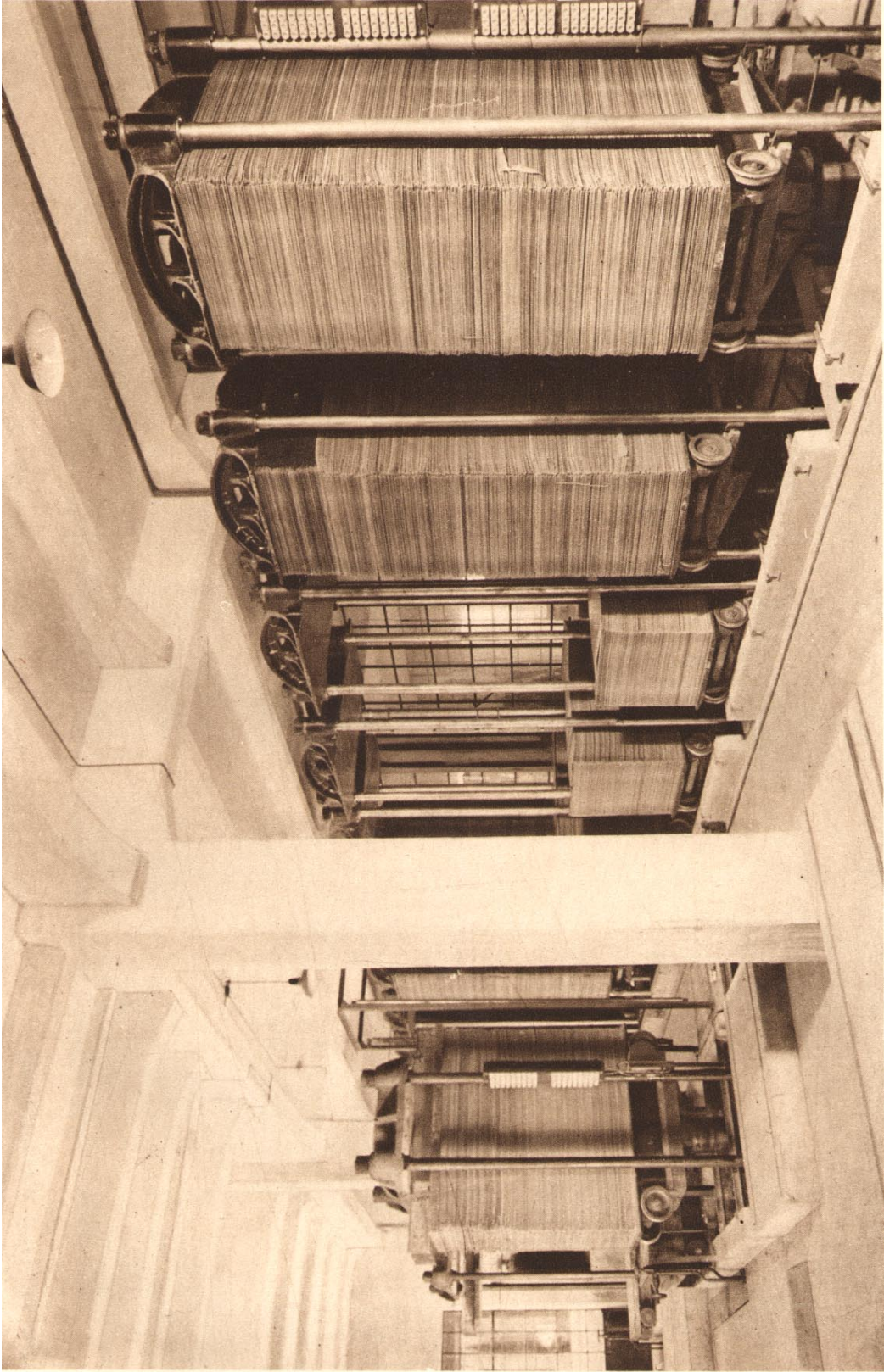
We may now visit the quiet and ordered shores that give value to the tumultuous sea. We may enter the analytical laboratories where the microscope probes the fibre and the gauge investigates within the body of the colour, where an instrument measures the resistance of the cloth and the figures of experience are called upon for comparison with those revealed by the experiment. Clear and orderly rooms, complete and sober as the logic of reckoning, with something mysterious about them to the layman like the bottom of natural laws dragged by mathematics. An even more dramatic mystery seems to reign in the electric power room — marble, metal and glass; levers that look as though they contained in silence the orders of immobility and crashing movement, of light and shade, the extremes of life;



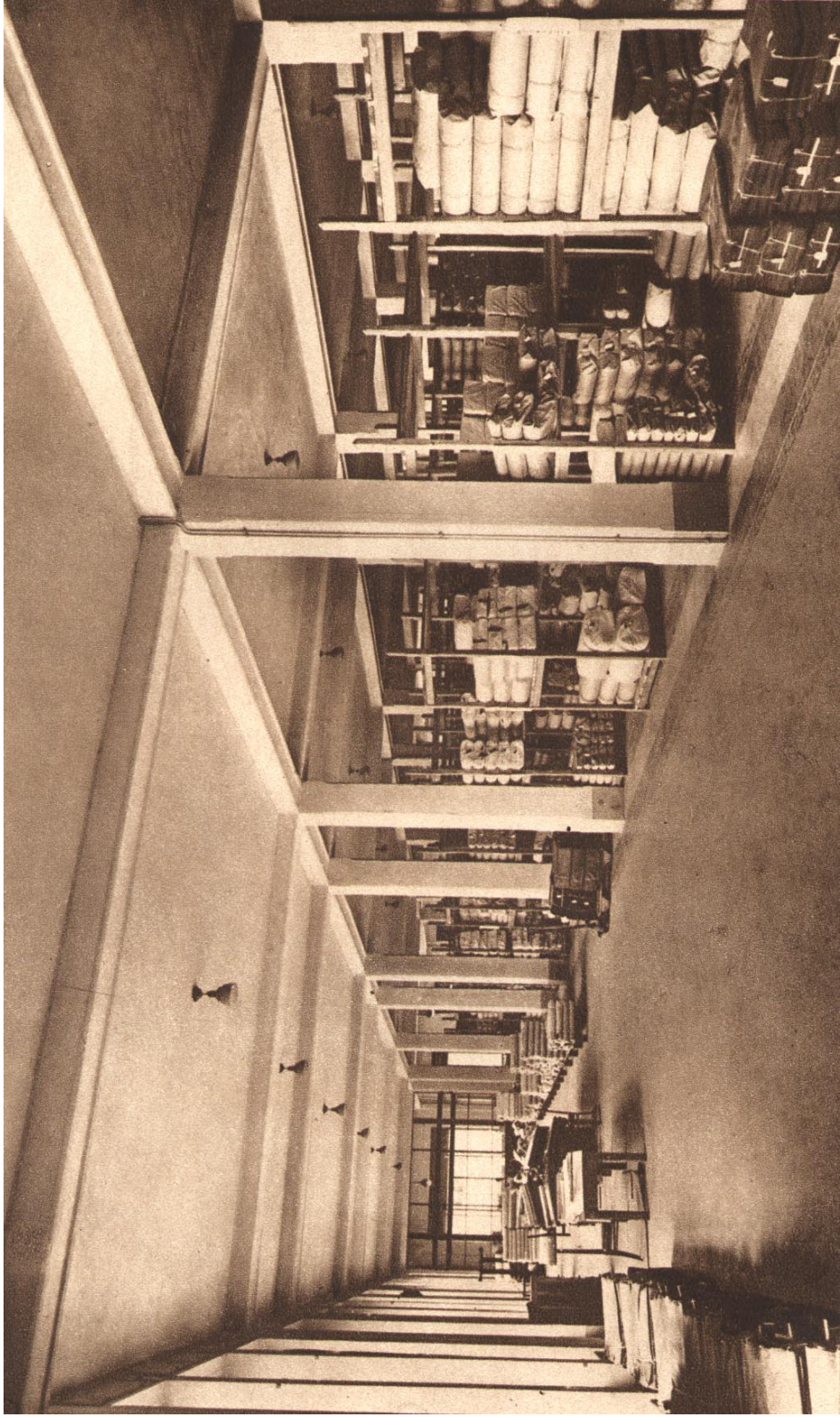
Fixing the Fabric

signals for giving and for receiving warnings; luminous buttons that suddenly die out, opaque eyes that suddenly light up, in seemingly secret relationship. To the inexpert who proceeds as though expecting an ambush there is something that lives in formidable power and disassembles itself like the jinni of Arabian mythology in the tales of Schahrazade. But everything is ordered and safe and the vitality of power and light passes from these automatic brains along nerves of copper to all the members and fills the day with noise for hundreds of colossal machines and thousands of vigilant and dexterous men. Here, for hours, there is nobody: the orders and means are given, the discipline is fixed in the pointers of the meters, and the torrent of cloth advances.

It runs and lands at the vast warehouse, whence it branches out radially into the world. From the shelves with their quiet harmonies of colours comes the smell of good wool, well prepared. Looking like painters' palettes, the pattern books on the counters display their range of colours; seen at close quarters they offer a variety of designs,



A BATTERY OF PRESSES



THE TEXTILE WAREHOUSES

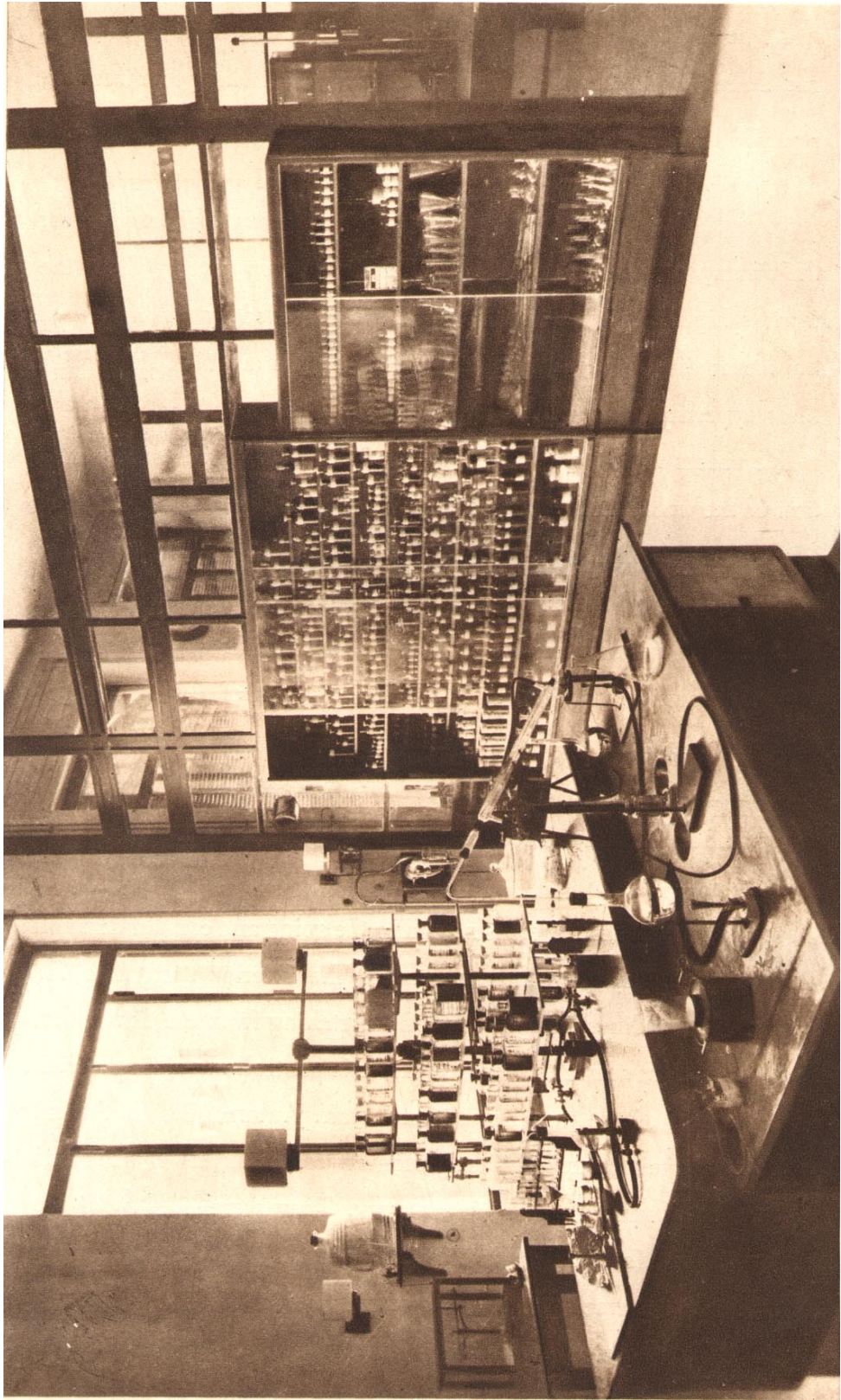
so subtle within the narrow limits allowed by the tradition of novelty: one thread lighter, another darker, a line with a changed direction, a theme which varies within restricted possibilities.

All these pieces are travellers in vast waiting rooms. They must leave on time and arrive at the right moment and at the right address; their many routes and destinations must be woven orderly along the world's highways, like the threads of wool guided by the healds of the loom; and to ensure that this is done there are men there with their typewriters, registers and indexes, their written words that weave orders and advices, their calculations that control the circulation of the wool and the circulation of money in the vast undertaking like in arteries and veins.

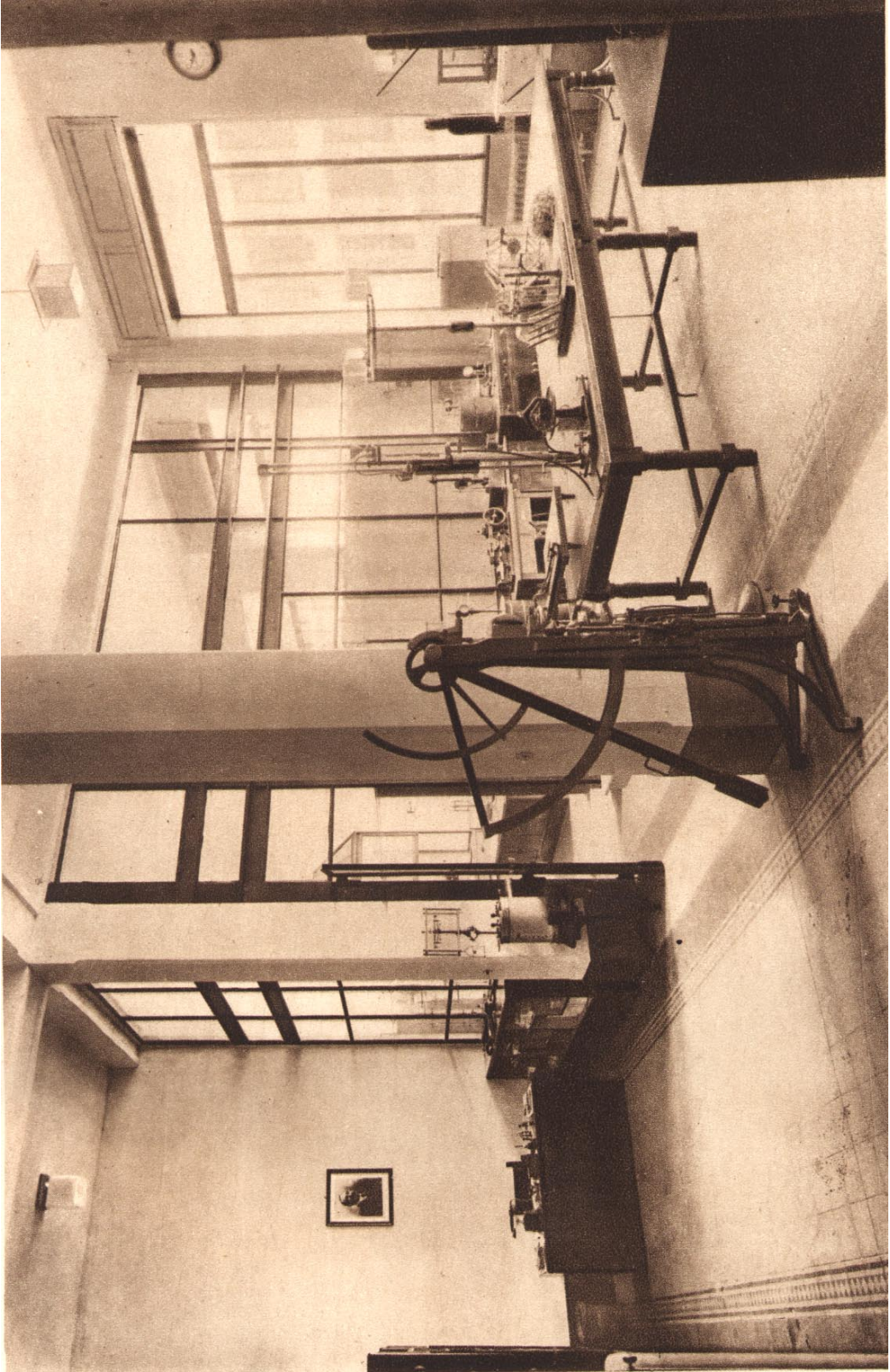
And over all these machines, these materials, these men, all this intricate and yet harmonious work of life and trade, there is a man.

And over this man, over this trusted captain of a small general staff, there is the tradition of a century, the ambition of three generations, the command to go forward, to rise and to win, expressed in a name that is his, although one which he holds as a trust and an obligation — Marzotto.

While work lasts there is no end to the going and coming through the big gates beyond which penetrates the interior road with the company's buildings to right and left, stretching from the time office, in which the movement of the operatives is controlled and registered, to the offices of the management and staff. Automobiles halt there and leave again. Suppliers, representatives, commercial travellers arrive. The young men are in a hurry. They were born with the machines and feel full of ambitious energy. The older men, more calm, have a warmer glance for that pile which has grown up in a century, become gigantic within a few decades, and assumed European and world importance within a fewer number of years. They



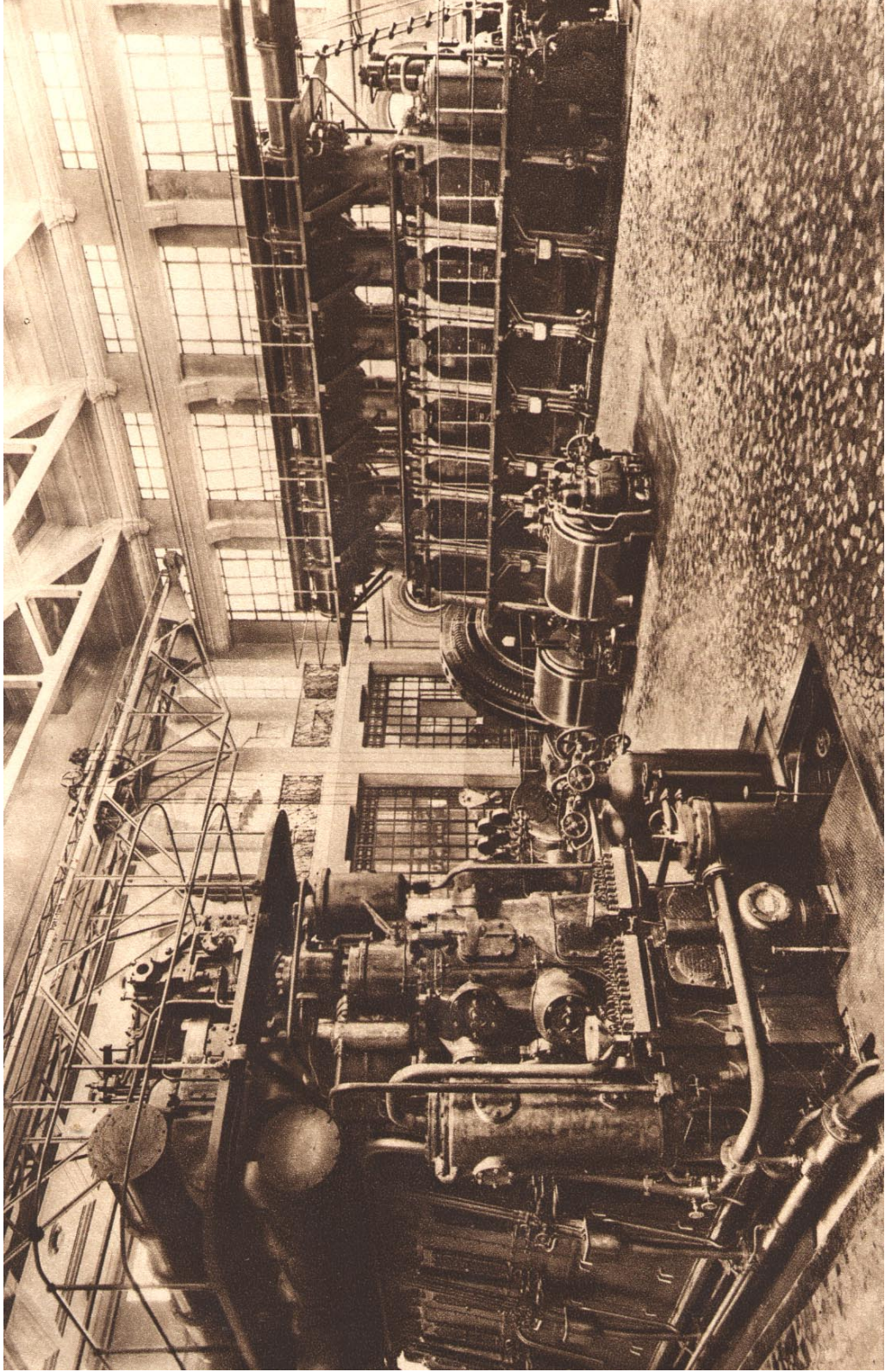
THE CHEMICAL LABORATORY



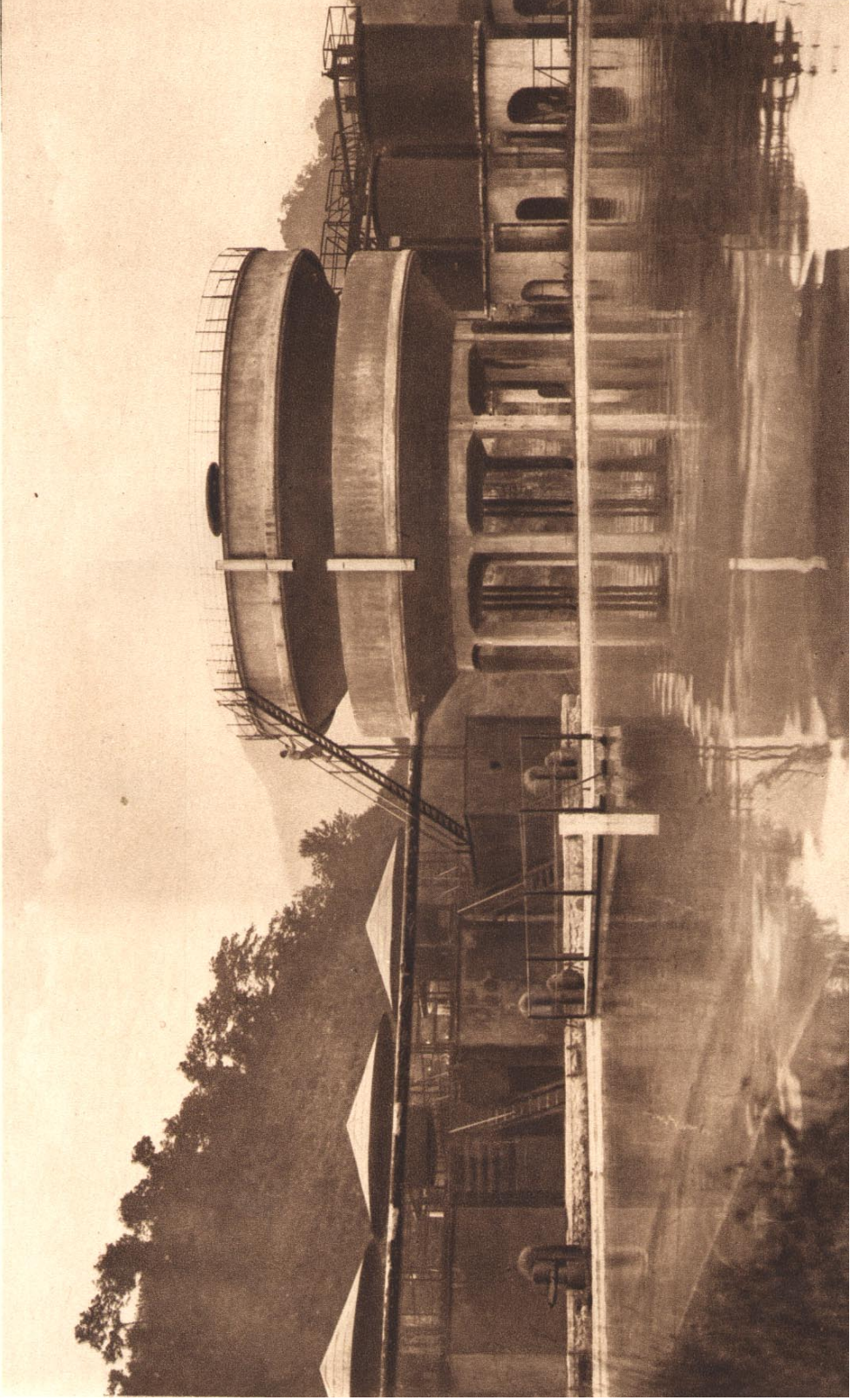
THE PHYSICAL IRONING



THE SWITCH ROOM IN THE GENERATING STATION



DIESEL ENGINES IN THE RESERVE GENERATING STATION



WATER CLEANSERS

know its history and have accompanied its progress in the phase of its greatest development. They love it like a veteran loves his victorious regiment, like a sailor loves the ship with whose fortunes he is identified.

One seems for a moment to be beside one of them. He raises his eyes and glances about him, nods his head as though to indicate the various buildings, here and elsewhere (the other establishments — Maglio di Sopra, Manerbio, Brugherio and Mortara — are present in his mind at this moment), and he turns aside and smiles, shaking his head as though in acknowledgement of the admiration of others and of the details of the manifest power.

The figures tell more. A century ago a small house, a few looms, a score or so of workmen; fifty years ago a sizable factory already, with hydraulic plant near Recoaro for the generating of power, with its turbines and machines and its hundreds — now thousands — of operatives. And what of it now!

«Do you know that this factory now covers an area of over seventeen acres, that the cubic volume of the workrooms in buildings of several floors is something like half a million cubic yards — sufficient, if converted into dwelling houses, to provide accommodation for twenty thousand people? Here alone, in ordinary times, there are more than four thousand operatives, and taking all the factories together, more than eight thousand. And if you consider the number of families, the number of other persons which this mass of workmen represents, you will realize that a small town lives about this industry which was started a century ago thanks to the humble but sound faith of Luigi Marzotto. In the big woollen warehouse down there, which has a capacity of nearly fifty thousand cubic yards — the space of a thousand rooms — thirty thousand bales, or more than ten million lb., can be stored. It would be necessary to shear

a million and a half sheep to fill it. Do you know that when the mill is working at full capacity more than seventy thousand lb. are turned out every day; that the ribbon you saw running from the machines into the conduits like a rivulet of milk, a trifled curdled, reaches more than seven hundred miles a day? ».

One seems to see this rivulet furrough half Italy with its soft whiteness.

« And these machines? Those spinning machines over forty yards long, each with a battery of seven hundred spindles? Altogether, the 115 thousand spindles spin as much thread in an hour as would girdle the equator, and as much in a day as would cover the distance to the moon and back, nearly half a million miles. These are something like figures! »

Fancy plays on the vastness of the proportions.

« And the marvel of those looms? Seven hundred of them lined up on four floors in rooms over two hundred yards long. It is not to be wondered that they produce over half a mile of cloth every hour, enough to clothe three hundred persons — and how many in a day or a year! And think of all the skeins prepared for domestic and industrial knitting! Think of these figures and see what progress has been made. Look, for that matter... ».

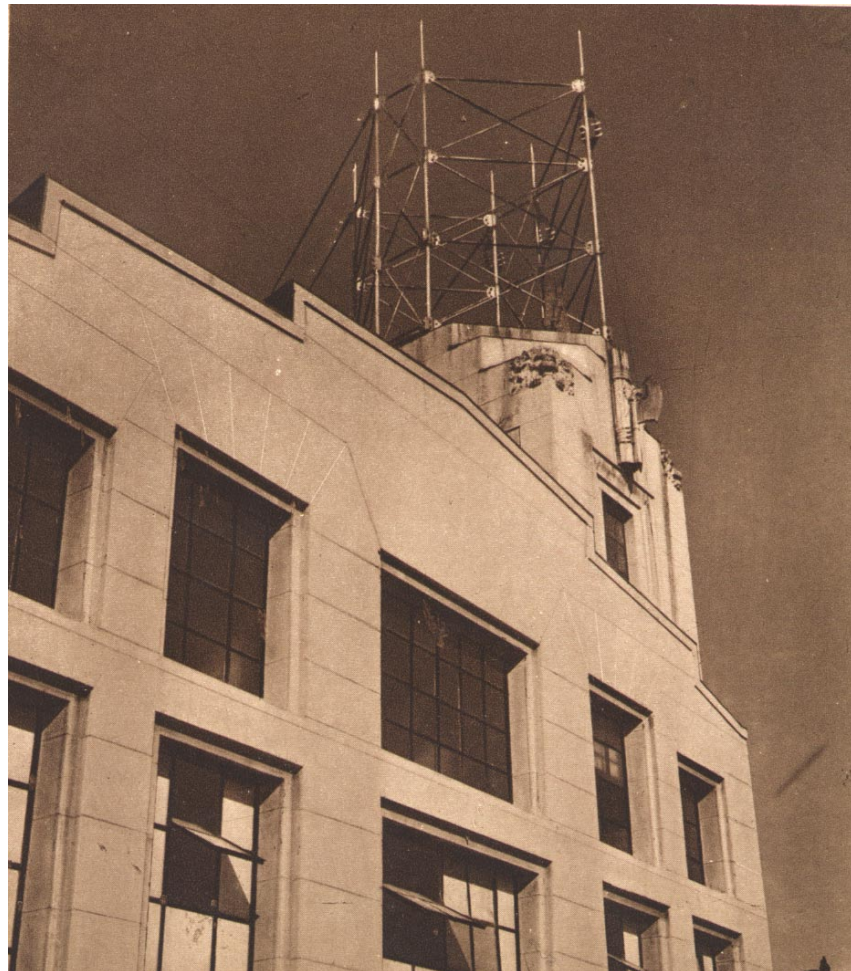
One thinks, looks, turns the figures over in one's mind, goes once more through the various operations, a trifle confusedly considering the number of rooms, up and down, with so many different kinds of machines and treatments; the ear once more perceives that crashing of the sea upon the rocks, the cascades in the chasms, and one understands why, at the end of a completed century, the thoughts of the heir turn to the simple and valiant man who one hundred years ago began to climb, strong-willed, adamant and intelligent. After all, although the machines have thrust themselves forward,

giant-like, although the walls have extended and increased in height, and although the pile lies down there in the valley with the mountains as a background more solemn and with greater right to live than the castles now fallen into ruin, the spirit is still the same — tenacious and intelligent will-power passed from soul to soul, vivid and bright, like the flame which passed from hand to hand in the ancient torch race.

Ambition, like a magic juvenile figure to which the years have added youth and vigour, has risen. It has long since overstepped the horizons of the valley, has looked far ahead, and now looks at the world from the Far to the Near East, from Europe to America. And the more it gazes into the distance, the more it feels Italian. For there is also a distance of centuries, and one's thoughts begin to turn without shame to the centuries in which the Italians were masters of the art and the suppliers of nations.

In truth, from one memory to another, one motive of pride to another, not only is a man and a family being commemorated, but also a nation and its glory that rises again and lightens the horizon — the woollen Italy of the Middle Ages and the Rinascimento.

Glimpse of the
Façade of the Ge-
nerating Station



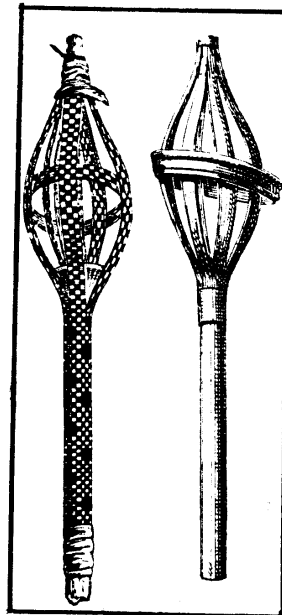


THE OFFICES

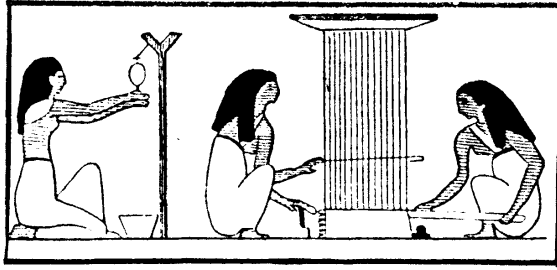
THIRD PART

IT is hard to say what art has a more distant background of centuries to its history. From the vast rooms vibrating with the throb of the engines and the noise of the machines, one's fancy retraces time as one remounts an endless river, seeking sources more mysterious than once were those of the Nile; that Nile on whose banks probably appeared — in the ancient world, forerunner of our civilization — the first looms. One's fancy goes back to the silence of milleniums, a screen on which vague figures move, united by distance. At the dawn of history there was a woman who spun, a woman who plaited the threads of the weft with the threads of the vertical warp; and Heaven and Earth smiled at the work. The deities taught the art which inaugurates, with the subjugated iron and the upturned soil, the civilization of mankind.

And the most luminous of all the divinities was the Greek Pallas, the Roman Minerva. It was to this goddess that the two great Mediterranean nations, the world's instructors in turn, attributed the invention of the loom and instruction in the art of weaving. She it was who wove the peplum, the stupendous work that Homer's fantasy saw. And the mortal women learned wonderfully well, like Arachne in the myth which is illustrated with such effect in the imperishable



Egyptian Distaffs



The Egyptian Vertical Loom

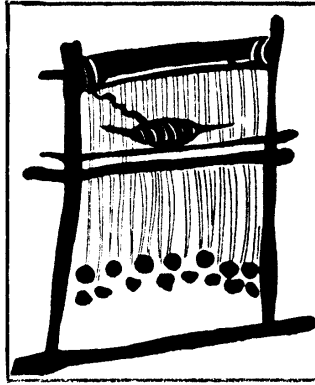
hexameters of Ovid and in which he gives us a description of the work that reveals the important part played by the loom in

ancient life and the importance poets attached to such work.

The poets heard the battering of the loom in every house; they had seen the mother or the sisters weave, then the handmaids and the alert and faithful slaves. They well knew the metrical art of work in woman's sphere before learning to weave the long and short syllables into their odes. Spindles twirl and looms batter throughout the whole of ancient literature. The most famous happenings, the most unforgettable adventures fail to still that familiar noise or to eclipse the vision of that domestic labour. Helen, the fatal woman, « was weaving a large and resplendent fabric with a double weft » in the house of the unworthy Paris, for whom she had forsaken country and husband, when Aphrodite appeared to her in the guise of « an ancient spinner of wool ».

It was at his home in the rustic Abruzzo that Ovid saw the work of the weaver which he afterward depicted with richer colours in the story of the match between Minerva and Arachne. Arachne of Lydia was the daughter of Idmone, who worked as a dyer, impregnating the fine soft wools from Asia Minor with Phenician purple, the fame of which still lived when the poet wrote. Her skill was noised far and wide, and the nymphs from the hills and the river often came to admire her work. The maid was proud of it and boasted that it would bear comparison with what Minerva herself could do. The goddess accepted the challenge and the two weavers set to work.

«Both hold the delicate chain. They tie it to the cross-bar of the loom with the threads separated by the cane comb, and the weft, disen-



The Loom of Circe the Enchantress

gled with the fingers, is inserted with the pointed shuttles and then struck with the teeth of the comb. Both work quickly: with their gowns girdled about their waists they move their expert arms, the passion with which they are enthused not allowing them to feel tired. Here they wove the wool dyed in the copper vat with slightly varying shades of Phenician purple... And here they insert the pliant threads of gold and design an ancient history ».

Magnificent work, an example of those oriental fabrics figured like tapestry, which showed how advanced was the art, traces of which remain in the sumptuous carpets. Minerva depicts with the shuttle the glories of the gods and the severe chastisement inflicted on presumptuous mortals. But the malicious Arachne paints the adventures of the gods with the beautiful females of the earth, and her fabric is such that neither Minerva nor even Invidia can find anything to say. Chagrined, the blonde goddess rips up the masterpiece of her rival and hits her three four times on the head with the shuttle in her hand. Angry, Arachne hangs herself; but Minerva, touched by her unsubdued courage, transforms her into a spider, which from then on wove in the air the fragile slenderness of its webs.

One is always in the wrong when dealing with the strong, especially when one is in the right. Something worse happened to Marsyas, the satyr, who challenged Apollo in music; the most refined of the gods had no repugnance in flaying him alive.

But when a purer religion got the upper hand, the art of wool-

making was carried on assiduously — without dramatic superfluities — in the house and family of Joseph the carpenter. The Virgin Mary had learned from her mother Anna and painting did not omit to recall this realistic detail of the origins of Christianity.

When and where the vertical loom was superseded by the more practical horizontal loom is not known with certainty. Perhaps in Egypt where, anyhow, the weaving of linen, and probably of cotton, was wider spread than that of wool; for the garments were generally of vegetable fabric, woollen stuffs merely serving as protection against sudden jumps in temperature and as blankets. It must be remembered that on the banks of the Nile wool was considered impure and, among other things, the priests and the faithful were forbidden to cross the thresholds of the temples dressed in woollen clothes and relatives of deceased persons were not allowed to swathe the dead in wool. Only a few of the oldest mummies, evidently belonging to a period when religious principles were not so strictly observed, have been found wrapped up in raw cloth. Also the Pythagoreans, in the southern part of Italy, associated the idea of purity only with linen and banished wool from the mystic functions and, as far as possible, from private life. If one bears in mind that with the Egyptians and

the followers of Pythagoras, who believed in metempsychosis, the cult of the animals was very keen as was also their aversion for a meat diet and, in general, for the exploitation of their mute brethren,

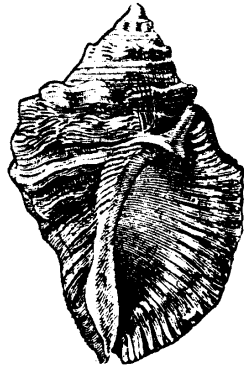


The Vertical Looms of Homer:
The Loom of the Chaste Penelope

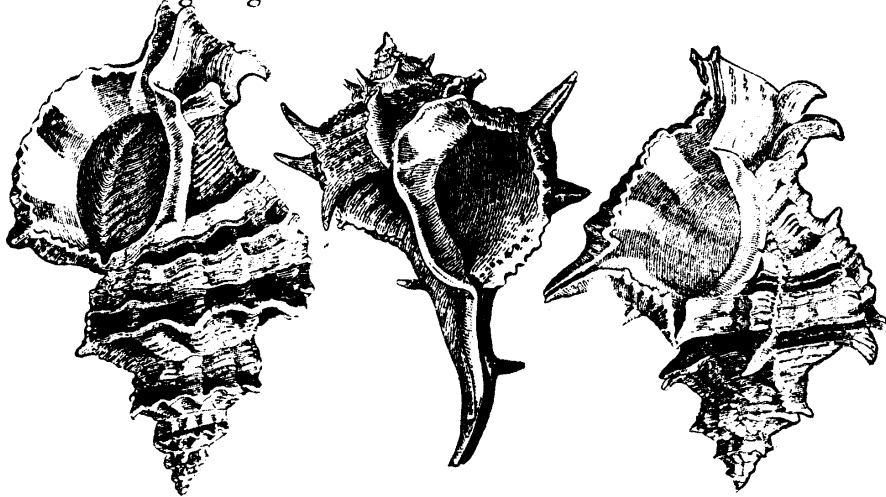
whose bodies might be housing the souls of departed fellow-beings, it will be clear that in the matter of clothes vegetable matter was preferred to animal matter.

But the woollen fabric had too many valuable qualities for it not to overcome these prejudices. It was the best covering and gave the best results in dying. Purple, in fact, the glory of the classical dyers, was restricted to wool; and purple contributed, along with the woollen trade, to the fortunes of the Phenicians, the first seafaring and mercantile nation of the Mediterranean. It is believed, indeed, that the birthplace of the loom was Sidon, the most important town in Phoenicia, before Tyre. It is undeniable that the dyed wool, and perhaps the garments, quickly increased the variety of goods which these shrewd semitic traders went about offering in all ports of the Mediterranean and perhaps beyond. They had already founded

Carthage when, in a still primitive world, they traded — according to Herodotus — primitively, depositing their wares upon the beach and lighting fi-



res to apprise the population of their arrival. The people came down to the shore after the traders had withdrawn to their ships, examined the mer-



Shellfish from which the Purple Dye was obtained

chandise and laid beside it the quantity of gold they were prepared to pay, withdrawing in their turn. Then the Phenicians of Syria or of Carthage disembarked again, took note of the quantity of gold offered and, if they found the deal to their liking, took the gold and departed. If not, they left the goods and the gold there and returned to their ships, after re-lighting the bonfires. At the sight of the new smoke the prospective buyers went down to the shore once more, saw that the price offered had not been accepted, and added something to it if they were intent on buying. If not, they took their gold and left, and the deal for that time was off. A simple system, that is to say — like many simple things — fairly complicated. The navigators of those days had neither the time nor the means, nor the safety, to conduct land trade. Afterward, enterprise extended marvellously.

The shellfish of the Phenician coast used in dyeing were not the only ones adopted for that purpose; murices were also fished in Italian waters and off the Atlantic seaboard. The latter, however, produced a rather dark hue, the Italians a violet, while the Tyrian shellfish alone produced that dark blood-red colour, which was the most valued. Fishing for shellfish was productive only in determinate periods and the preparation of the pigment and the dye — which



Hellenic Weavers



The Three Parcae, one of whom spins the Thread of Human Life

for wools and garments of the finest quality was a twofold operation — required much care and much practice. A fine garment, offered by a Tyrian merchant, who guaranteed its origin, was an « article » of importance. Homer had already spoken about it. And the ready-made clothes business, at bottom, was more natural and easier than now, for in ancient times garments were merely fabrics and materials that could easily be made to drape any figure. The tunic and the cloak — the former of linen and the latter of wool — which in due proportion and with different designations constituted the sartorial fundamentals in the Greek and Roman worlds, did not need to be cut to strict measurements like modern suits. The folds were everything, and personal taste was revealed chiefly in the art of arranging the folds, both in the scanty costume of the Greek dancer and in the ample toga of the Roman senator. Nowadays the buyer of a ready-made suit is one who contents himself with little and aims only at saving, whereas the Roman patrician boasted of the toga that had reached him from Parma.

The Madonna and Saint Elisabeth engaged in wool-making (from an old woodcut)



Yet, a greater development of this trade among the ancients was impeded by the prevalently familiar nature of the weaving and the manufacture of the garments. The woollen industry was born in the house and was long the chief family occupation. For a long time the trade deriving therefrom was at first limited to the distribution of the product among the neighbours of the house where wool from private flocks and arms of free women and slaves were plentiful. It then became the industry of the poor people who spun and wove beyond their own personal needs for the sake of gain, and, finally, it expanded in the periods of more complex civilization in Greece and especially in Rome. Soldiers, travellers and bachelors had to be clothed, and then the families that began to abandon that humble and monotonous work for more elegant occupations, more delectable pleasures.

Penelope wove, but Aspasia in the house of Pericles was surrounded by the best wits of Athens. Socrates, who had left his peevish wife Xantippe at the loom, shone in that company. Tarquin became infatuated with the chaste Lucretia because she was good to look on near the domestic loom among the handmaids that spun.

Virtue is a drug to the palate of the libertine. But the matron of the Empire, who dyed her dark Latin hair to imitate the German women and passed a good part of the day with mirror in hand, among her cosmetics and perfumes, before going to the Circus to appraise the muscles of the gladiators and to smile at the young people who read Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* — she no longer cared to have the smell of the wool about the house, the slaves with the distaff in their hand and the annoying noise of the loom. All this work, for that matter, was carried out — on a large scale, moreover — in the agricultural estates of the patricians. With the multitude of slaves they had (the richest houses would have been able to raise an army) it was only natural that a part should be engaged in spinning and weaving the wool from the numerous flocks belonging to the master.

The first stage in the evolution of the industry had, however,



Woollen and Silk
Fabric of the Ro-
man Period

already taken place in Greece. There were women in the market place of Athens who offered wool for sale done up in balls; and garments were sold in the squares where the different kinds of trade were carried on. In ancient times, as also in the Middle Ages, the square was preferred to the shop, because the buyer realized that he had a larger and better choice when the goods were all in one place and could judge the prices better. Certain squares in Athens resembled those in the suburbs of modern cities with their local markets. The peasants who wait for the fair of the patron saint in their village or for the more celebrated fair of the neighbouring town to buy the cloth which is no longer woven at home and to make the chief purchases of the year, continue to live like the primitive men who awaited the Phœnician galleon, like the Greek who went to market, like man of all times and all countries in zones of social life that do not allow of the liberality of purchases made in luxury shops with uncontrolled prices.

The woollen industry had already gained an important place in the economic life of Greece or that centring in Greece. Sheep-rearing had developed in the mountainous districts of Attica and wool of good quality had been produced, although not so fine as that from Asia Minor, which came from Lydia, where also weaving was being rapidly developed. Perhaps the fable of the match between Minerva and Arachne symbolized the rivalry between the products of Sardis (the capital of Lydia) and Athens. The garments of Lydia were in great demand, also on account of their fine shades, by the Ionic populations, together with the curtains, the carpets and the historiated coverlets, and had superseded the ready-made costumes and other woollen products exported from northern Africa with its abundance of flocks. Nevertheless, during Rome's most sumptuous period, African cloths, cushions and coverlets were still appreciated, while the

nomadic peoples of Lybia continued to live chiefly on the proceeds of the fleeces from their sheep. Malta, also, then inhabited by the Phenicians, had a good reputation for the fineness and softness of its fabrics.

The wool from Phrygia was particularly appreciated, as were also the very delicate skins of the rabbits and goats of Angora and the specially embroidered materials from Laodicea, the boast of this city to imperial Rome. For a long time, however, the largest centre of the industry in the Mediterranean was Miletus. To give an idea of this city's prosperity, which depended chiefly on the woollen trade, it was said that Miletus had founded three hundred towns on the Pontus Euxinus (Black Sea). These towns could not have been larger than our present-day villages (the Greeks were men of fertile imagination and prone to magnify the proportions of things and facts in their recitals; the whole of Greek history, it might be said, is an enlargement of proportions, and there is something to be said for the para-

doxical criticisms according to which ancient Greece is in part a masterpiece of literary creation). But even allowing for exaggeration, it would seem that Miletus was a small London of ancient times as far as wool was concerned. During the expansion of the Empire the Romans found it



Funeral Record of a Roman Sagario (cloak merchant)

still flourishing and they brought back luxurious products and the celebrity thereof to the mother-country. The flocks of Pontus were raised with great care. Like those of Attica, the sheep of this region of Asia wore a small cover to protect the fleece from thorns and excessive dirt.

It is probable that the Athenians learned this refinement from the Milesians. Wools and garments of Greece and Asia were present in large quantities at the panhellenic fairs of Corinth, Olympia, Delphi and Delos, near the great sanctuaries and the glorious stadia. But for some time austere Sparta banned the dyers because their garments had to be the natural colour of wool.

Asia had an insuperable tradition of luxury, and to this tradition belong the sumptuous materials, often woven with gold threads, and the magnificent garments which penetrated with greater frequency into Greece after the conquests of Alexander the Great. With regard to whom, Quintus Curtius relates an anecdote that illustrates the industrial character of the Asiatic woollen industry. Having made the family of Darius prisoners, Alexander, who had received some fine garments from Macedonia according to the taste of the country,

had the idea of offering them as a gift, along with the workmen who had made them, to the mother of Darius, whom he honoured as his own mother. He sent word that, if she liked them, the workmen



could teach weaving to her nieces. « But the Queen considered the suggestion as offensive because nothing is more repugnant to the women of Persia and nothing is deemed more opprobrious than wool-making ».

Alexander apologized to her saying: « Mother mine, this garment I wear is not merely a present from my sisters but is also the work of their hands ».

Evidently wool-making in Persia was left to the lower classes, artisans and slaves, on an industrial scale. In Greece, especially in the rude and sturdy Macedonia, on the contrary, it was a domestic occupation for the poor and for the families of princes alike.

DURING the monarchical and republican beginnings of Rome wool-making was a purely domestic occupation, and continued to be such during the best period of the Republic, when the highest eulogium — which became proverbial — of the Roman matron, engraved on her tomb, was « Casta vixit, lanam fecit, domi mansit » (she lived chastely, spun wool, and was devoted to her home). The beginning of an industrial development already appeared with the speculation of the owners of large estates, where the slaves were numerous, and with the needs of the poor families in the city. Then the Mediterranean conquests encouraged importation from countries already established on an industrial basis, Africa and Ionia; and this importation stimulated Italian production in places where extensive pastureland fed numerous flocks and in coastal towns where murices were fished for their purple dye. Naturally, the snobs continued to prefer Asiatic materials...

With the rise of the Empire the matrons relinquished domestic wool-making. Many would neither make wool nor stay at home, and as to their chastity, Ovid, Petronius and the historians knew to what it amounted.

The proverbial inscription on the by now archaic tombs began to wear off and disappear. It will, however, be admitted that when an industry reaches notable proportions and increasing production eases prices, domestic work naturally loses its economic value and its poetical traditions fade.

Italy became the queen of the woollen industry. It was her first glory, which was followed by the second one at the end of the

Middle Ages. Naturally, imports continued. Miletus was still a great name. The emporium of Smyrna, a city which has remained highly commercial to the present day, was still of appreciable importance; and coarse but useful cloths and clothes came from Illyria — cloaks with hoods for the winter, for example, and also «dalmatics», which afterward left their name to the ecclesiastical vestment — and also from transalpine Gaul. Gaul also sent cushions stuffed with woollen waste, and Gaulic breeches found their way to Rome.

Of more importance and greater value was the importation of Spanish wools and materials. Even then the Iberian sheep, especially those of Betica — a province defined by Augustus and corresponding approximately to the modern Andalusia, with the very important port of Cadiz — furnished wool of a high quality. They were the ancestors of the merinos, which gave rise to the best breeds in the world. The fleece of the Betic sheep was tawny — golden, said Marzial, the Spanish poet, who, when praising a maiden's fairness, used to say that her hair beat the colour of this fleece. And such was the merit of this wool that although garments were made in abundance on the spot, it was the raw material that was chiefly exported, as happened with the English wools in the Middle Ages. But Italy, who today is almost solely dependent on the foreigner for the raw material, then had wools which could rival with the best from the other parts of the Empire. The sheep of Taranto were so appreciated that they were introduced into Spain for crossing with the native breeds in order to improve the strain. The «pugliese» wool and that from Magna Grecia (the southern part of Italy) — the product of native crossed with Greek sheep — was stated by Pliny to be superior even to that of Miletus; it was a somewhat short staple, though sound. This was a common boast of the Abruzzo region, because the flocks from the plains of Puglia used to pass the summer on the fresh green pastures of the Abruzzo mountains, as they did for centuries afterward and still do so, although on much too small a scale. But the really finest wool came from Taranto, and it was said

The «Taberna» of
a Roman Clothes
Merchant



Material handed
back cleaned to
the Customer of
a Roman Fuller

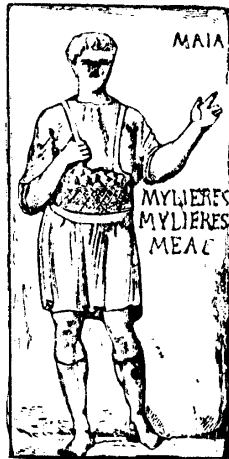
that its excellence was due to the effect of the water of the Galesus (now Galaso) in which the sheep bathed, like the excellence of the Betic wool was attributed to the water of the Betis (now the Guadalquivir). Taranto, together with the Ionic coast, along which nothing remains but the record of the opulent effeminacy of Sybaris, was the Italic Miletus for the fineness of its wool and the soft elegance of its fabrics. Like the Milesians, the Tarantine shepherds covered their sheep with skins in order to protect the fleece. There were also flocks belonging to the State, so important had this branch of economic life become. Looms in large numbers resounded also in Canosa and Lucera. The primacy of Magna Grecia was challenged and, as far as volume was concerned, was beaten by the production of northern Italy, which then bore the name of Cisalpine Gaul. The white wools of the Paduan plains were rightly famous. Those of Modena, among the most appreciated, benefited, as was said of the wools of Taranto and Betica, by the water of the Panaro, then called the Scultanna. But the fabrics of Parma were even more famous in the first period of the Empire. The wools from Cremona were also esteemed. The greater part of the large flocks that pastured on the Paduan plains belonged to rich citizens of Rome, who drew handsome profits from them.

Other northern wools of repute were the dark ones of Pollentia (now Pollenzo), in Liguria, near the confluence of the Stura and the Tanaro, under the heights of the Langhe. And there were the Venetian wools, of a quality between the Modenese and the Ligurian wools, that came down from the mountains and hills to the towns

Another Roman Shop for the Sale of Fabrics



of the plains. Among these may be mentioned Verona and Padua, which latter took pride of place; the rich and mighty Padua of the Empire, of which it was said that it could raise innumerable cavaliers for the field of battle and which was famous for a specialty known as « gausape », a material with a hairy nap, familiar to the Rome of Augustus. This material was also produced in Verona and probably — although there is no sure record — in the territory of Vicenza. The Veronese « lodici » were rough covers, ordinary floor carpets, and packing cloths. And in the Vicenza region — as has been noted — epigraphs have been found recording the « centonari », wool-workers and probably also tailors who prepared « centoni ». These were cloths of inferior quality put to various uses, from the kind of mattress for placing against the walls of encampments and as shields for field engines in order to protect them against the enemy's catapults, to covers for beds and horses (they placed them, for example, under the pack-saddle to lessen the rubbing and, for the same reason, they made caps for soldiers for wearing under the helmet) and to the rough cloths and, in particular, the materials made out of various pieces (whence the name « centoni »), feasibly the better parts of used clothes, with which they made fatigue dresses for artisans and slaves. Naturally, these centonari were to be found in all countries of the Empire, especially when the corporations acquired greater importance and became numerous, indeed, universal.



The Roman Hawker: «Ladies, Ladies Mine».

THE Roman guilds were known as «collegia»: whence the term «colleague» still used. At the beginning there were colleges that gathered together men engaged in the same sacred or secular functions, which meant priests and magistrates and those who followed the principal trades. According to Plutarch, it was Numa Pompilius who began the guild movement, setting up eight guilds, among which there were the fullers or dyers, the only workers to represent the complex art of wool-making.

The fact that they were the only representatives is understandable. (Even the bakers were absent, for the bread was baked at home). Wool-making was, as has been mentioned, a domestic occu-



Another Roman Shop for the Sale of Fabrics

pation in which free women and slaves were for the most part engaged. Fulling alone, of which dyeing was an integral part, would have been difficult, cumbersome and unpleasant to do at home. It was only natural, therefore, that fulling plants for collecting the cloths woven at home and milling, dyeing and cleaning them should have arisen. In the same way, not long afterward, there were bakers who specialized in baking bread kneaded at home, thereby relieving families of the expense and disturbance of a domestic oven. This practice is still followed in certain provinces of Italy, as is also that of the slaughterer in rural districts who still kills the pig or the sheep destined for immediate consumption or for the pantry of large families.

When speaking of the frescoes found in Pompeii, mention was made of the wicker cage that the Pompeian fuller carried probably for fumigating the cloth with sulphur. Now on the top of that cage is an owl, a bird sacred to Minerva, because Minerva, the inventress of art, was the tutelary deity of the woollen industry, as she was, more or less, of all the arts of civilization and peace. During the Roman Quinquatrus, which was a festive period lasting from March 19 to 23 in honour of the goddess, taking part along with other workmen (and with school teachers, considering the affinity between study and work in civilized life and social progress) were on the one hand the fullers and on the other the women who attended to house duties, among which wool-making was by far the most important.

During the period of the Empire it is probable that the domestic family workers were reduced to few and their place alongside the



The «Circitores»
Itinerant Cloth
Sellers

fullers in the Minerva festivities was taken by the weavers, the aforementioned « centonari », and, in the seaports, among others, the « murilegoli » or fishers of the murices for their purple. The number of guilds, in fact, had been increasing according as industrial labour superseded domestic labour. And with the increase in number their constitution had undergone change. At the beginning the so-called workmen's colleges « collegia opificum », were something like the old workers' associations, grouping together a determinate category of workers. They served to maintain contact, to give a certain feeling of fraternity, to arouse collective interest in the happenings and developments of the trade, to make assistance available to needy members and, chiefly, as in the Middle Ages, to provide for the burial of deceased members (the fullers of Aquileia had their own cemetery) and to practise religious observances in common.



Another « Circitor »

Several of these colleges had their « scholae », which had nothing to do with instruction. Here we have a curious example of the fate of words. « School » is a word that comes from the Greek, meaning rest, recreation, and served to indicate a meeting place for entertainment, with, however, a prevalently sacred character, provided by associations: a kind of chapel. The « scholae » were thus the meeting places of the colleges or guilds. Their name still remains in Venice in the School of San Rocco, the School of Carmine, and so on. The colleges had their own board of administration, their executives and their by-laws.

As was inevitable, with the degeneration of republican morals and the gradual corruption of Roman public life, the colleges became breeding-grounds of political passions and agitations. Electioneering propaganda, with the systems we know from history, which in greater or lesser degree are common to all times, was rife.

Caesar and then Augustus took measures, dissolving many of them and leaving the older and more serious ones standing. Their number increased again, however, during the course of the Empire, and State supervision, which in the old days had been slight and summary, became increasingly strict. Membership of a guild was compulsory, even from father to son, and corporative legislation was complex and rigid. Thus the guilds gradually acquired greater affinity with those which later were a special feature of medieval life, with this difference, however: the medieval guilds enjoyed greater independence and authority in municipal life, whereas the imperial guilds felt the weight of State guidance and supervision to a greater extent. This was especially the case with guilds which looked after works of prime public interest and any irregularities in which were capable of prejudicing civic life and public order. The discipline to which workmen in the State-monopolized industries under the Empire were subjected was even more strict. Among these industries figured here and there weaving and purple dyeing — in Tarranto the latter trade was of capital importance — with various categories of workmen including those who, even at that time, for the dyeing of ordinary cloths, used colours extracted from vegetable matter on account of the high cost of the purple dye. There were State-owned woollen mills — chiefly for military needs — at Ravenna, Padua, Rome, Milan and several towns of Gaul and it would seem that the first English woollen mill was set up by Roman troops in the place now called Worcester. This discipline was eventually extended to the commercial side of the industry when trade assumed dimensions corresponding to the economic and political importance and complexity of the Empire.

There were companies, in the modern sense of the term, with capitalists and what we might call technicians; and there were also brokers, who then were called negotiators, chiefly handlers of money, with their intermediaries, and merchants who dealt directly in commerce, wholesale or in more modest proportions. The tra-

desmen, keepers of the « tabernae », did a retail trade in competition with the vendors who set up their booths in the public squares. There is a record of a « woollen » square in Rome.

The poor shopkeeper was harassed with the eternal worry of having to contend with a privileged competitor in the person of the vendor who with a few staves set up his shop in the square and at a certain hour nonchalantly dismantled it, and the hawker who went about crying his wares with the characteristic modulations which of themselves indicated the nature of his trade. There is still in existence a basso-rilievo with the figure of a seller of apples beside which is inscribed his cry « Apples, ladies, ladies mine », not very different from the cry of his modern confrères. Others cried cloths of various qualities and fineness and displayed them to the women in the streets and under the more frequented arcades or offered them from house to house. These hawkers were usually called « circitores », from « circiter », which means « round about ». It is also probable that these competitors came to some sort of an arrangement — the tradesman who kept a shop would hire space in a square and display his goods during market hours and would engage one or more circitores to hawk them about.

Athens and Rome, at the height of their fortunes and development, pursued the life of today — save for certain forms and proportions — also from an economic point of view. Much human labour, which in consequence of the large number of slaves cost little, and practically no machinery; but workshops, bankers, business men, well-to-do persons who invested their money in trade and industry, real industrialists who personally managed their undertakings, workmen grouped together in guilds with contributions fixed by the authorities, wholesale merchants, shopkeepers, hawkers, with even then that mercantile impudence which caused the Greek philosopher Diogenes Laertius to remark « In the shops they lie like anything ».

The fall of the Empire and the barbarian invasions then plun-

ged Europe into forms of primitive life under more than one aspect. The big industries languished and expired. Trade shrank. The loom began to beat once more in the home and once more became its rhythmic and tenacious heart.



The Sign of the Florentine Woolen Guild (by Luca della Robbia, in the Museum of the Cathedral)

IT must not be thought, however, that the Middle Ages began, like in a theatre piece, with a dark curtain rapidly dropped on the sparkling scene of ancient civilization. The decline occurred with comparative slowness as disorder gradually prevailed in the vastness of the Empire, the incursions of the barbarians became more frequent with their sackage and destruction, the uncertainty of the morrow discouraged industrialists and merchants, the streets became increasingly unsafe, private wealth — that great mainspring of general prosperity — harried and dismayed, was withdrawn or dissimulated or passed from the prodigal hands of the citizens to the more cautious and closed hands of the country people, when it was not requisitioned by the barbarians who had installed their feudal regime. Nor had the barbaric multitudes any great sartorial pretensions, their requirements being chiefly of a military nature. Their princes, at most, might have had a weakness for sumptuous garments, but their relations had been more with Byzantium than with Rome; and the East, even through the Greek domination in some parts of Italy, continued to trade in the European parts of

the Empire, although in considerably reduced proportions, its luxurious fabrics (mostly of silk), which served, among other things, to enhance the external dignity of the new religion in the vestments of the priests. Then the Arabs, who with the Mahometan conquests had reached that higher grade of civilization and refinement which always results from successful wars and territorial and economic expansion, became another great intermediary between the sumptuous East and the decadent West, to which latter they brought fine materials and still finer carpets from Armenia, rich in flocks yielding the softest of wool, or delicate Persian cloths from Chiraz, the poetical land of roses.

The changing of the dominant authorities, the defects of feudalism, the depopulation and the loss in importance of the big imperial cities, beginning with Rome — even though it had become the seat of the supreme head of the Church —, the impoverishment of the citizen — the ideal consumer for encouraging a variety and abundance of products —, the abasement of the peasant, reduced to a glebe serf, the disastrous state of agriculture which had fallen under the yoke of a rapacious and ignorant rule of overlords: all these factors reduced and for a long time kept every trade to a rude and narrow activity and commerce to trifling proportions. Commerce needs safety before everything, and the feudal multiplication of small principalities gave rise to so many risks and obstacles that the merchant found he had to risk too much for too little. The little enterprise that remained was that displayed by the small trader, the itinerant vendor, who carried his worldly wealth about with him and who, if robbed, made the best of matters, and, humble and shrewd as he was, and often following more than one trade at one and the same time (this is still the custom with these people), as often as not managed to come out on top. Even when industry flourished once more and commerce acquired new audacity and strength, the history of these two activities up to the time of the Renaissance is a continual struggle against the persi-

stent dangers deriving from the political and economic state of Europe.

In the houses of town-dwellers, as in the hamlets and villages, the loom, which had never disappeared, once more became the instrument of work par excellence. The « courts » of the castles, where the rural population centred, carried on the various occupations, chiefly the spinning and weaving of the wool which

usually came from the flocks belonging to the lord of the castle. The lady herself not infrequently supervised the slaves and handmaids at their work, thus creating the impression of a return to the strict times of republican Rome and to the austere Lucretias, whose attention to the work in hand was barely diverted by the songs and witticisms of the strolling players and by the passage of the itinerant vendor, sometimes a Greek from Asia, who peddled the rich fabrics of his country.

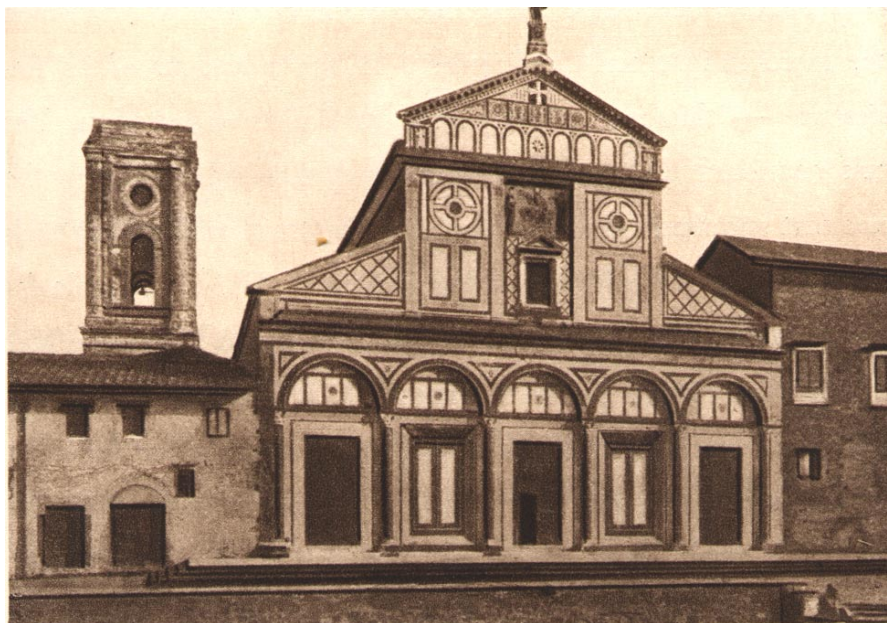
Even where traces of once flourishing industries still remained or where numerous poor families and traditions of a certain ability allowed of a more plentiful production to entrust to commerce, such production retained a family impress which became artisan in the period of its greatest development. It was not until much more recent times, in England at the end of the eighteenth century, that the house or the shop changed into the factory, recalling — with greatly differing proportions — the slave workshops of the big Roman estates and also, to a certain extent, the medieval convent. For also woolmaking, like farming and knowledge, found



The Edifice of the Woollen Guild at Florence

refuge in the convents, which gathered together all that could be salvaged from the wreckage of civilization and protected it from total ruin. The manuscripts relating to pagan culture were preserved in the convent libraries; the abandoned lands, reduced to wilderness and marsh, were reclaimed and re-populated with workers. And wool-making had its place among the works of the soil and the resumption of sheep-raising. The woollen industry revived wherever a feminine benedictine family gathered together in the shade of a church tower under the monastic rule of the great Italian saint, who had declared sloth to be the greatest enemy of the soul and had given to labour the value of prayer. Fine materials, destined for princes and, especially, prelates, were made in the nunneries, and a part was probably given in exchange for money or things of which the community had need from outside. A Florentine document of the ninth century records that the nuns of St. Andrew had to deliver a garment of goat's wool each year to the ecclesiastical authorities. The fabrics woven by the nuns of St. Michael were much appreciated. They had an actual mill and obligated themselves to weave each year five pieces of cloth for the abbot of Nonantola, who supplied the wool, and — managing the women sent by that abbot — were able to provide cloth also for other persons under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Nonantola.

Weaving was done in the monasteries of St. George and St. Peter in Lucca, St. George in Lodi, practically everywhere in short. Before the time of St. Benedict, St. Jerome had handed down the « lanam fecit » of the Roman matron to the medieval men when he wrote to Demetriade, mother-superior of a Roman nunnery: « When thou hast finished the prayer of the chorus, do not set down the wool; continue to move thy fingers among the threads of the distaff or press the warp with the shuttles of the loom. Gather together the products of the diligence of the sisters to make them expert in the work of weaving and accurately examine the fabric; if bad, reject it and do as thou thinkest best ».



The Church of S. Miniato al Monte, entrusted to the Woolmakers' Guild

THE re-birth of the industry took place with a rapid and splendid blossoming which was to constitute an unforgettable boast and a source of wealth for some towns and districts of Italy when the municipalities came into being — those glorious creations due chiefly to the workers, to the industrial middle class, to the needs and civilizing energy of trade. The feudal lords followed the life of the castle, a life of idleness and war, of intrigues and of deceptions alternately practised and suffered: the industrious and trading population, on the contrary, brought about the rise of the West, gave to Italy and Europe the civilization reminiscent of Rome, compelled the mighty to live in the towns for the better control of their activities and obliged them to truncate or demolish their towers and to recognize in trade and industry the possibilities of a better existence also for them, to find once more in labour or in association with labour the rights they had justly lost — new rights, limited and more suited to the times.

Italy, let it be remembered, more than any other European country, has the greatest title to nobility in the field of labour. Italy,

which became once more the centre of the civilized world, which once more enlightened the peoples with the splendour of its Renaissance — this was an Italy of industrialists and traders. Her work nourished the arts, revived culture, restored to poetry the voice that surmounts the centuries. And the art of woolmaking took first place in this wealth of human endeavour. Dante, of noble family, enrolled in one of the guilds that constituted Florentine life, loved his fine church of San Giovanni which was entrusted to the wooltraders' guild of Calimala; saw, before leaving for his long and sorrowful exile, the new cathedral begin to rise through the care of the woolmakers' guild, and saluted the old church of San Miniato on the hill, which was under the care of the same guild. Churches and palaces that made Italian towns a perpetual marvel to foreigners rose with the vernal breath of labour. The money of the producers and merchants flowed back into works of art. Not only in Italy but also in other countries. If all the public buildings and works of art that have been promoted, encouraged and paid for by woolmakers were collected in a volume, this volume would be found to contain a large part of Italian and European beauty, especially from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the end of the fifteenth.

It is well therefore to linger somewhat in these two centuries, which are perhaps the best Italy has ever seen and which, representing the glory of the woollen industry, constitute a potent stimulus, even in this field, to the ambition of Italians of the twentieth century.

It must be noted, before anything else, that the great prosperity of the industry in Italy followed a progressive debasement of Italian wools and the increasing prevalence of foreign wools, especially English, and that for this reason the Italian woollen industry

was seriously handicapped in comparison with that of the Low Countries and also that of northern France, which could obtain supplies of the British raw material more rapidly and regularly. The Low Countries, moreover, being of great political importance to England, profited also by reason of this particular circumstance. So the woollen industry of Flanders and Brabant achieved renown at an early stage and for a long period was not only the source of wealth but also the basis of their municipal history. The fact, therefore, that Italy managed to reach the place she reached among the markets of the world was due to the ability of her workers and to the genius of her traders, an example to be added to the others, and placed among the foremost of them, of what man can do against natural difficulties and against the very course of historical events.

The chief merit belongs to her navigators. Whereas land routes seemed arduous on account of their bad state and the harrying of princes and all sorts of dangers, the ships of the Italian maritime republics boldly wove a dense network of communications in the Mediterranean. Perils were by no means lacking. There were clashes with pirates, disturbances in the ports of disembarkment, threatening gales, shipwrecks, in which when life was safe everything else was lost, for on the neighbouring shores the populations awaited these disasters as blessings from Heaven. (They went sometimes so far as to celebrate nine days' devotions invoking God and the Madonna — «maris stella» — to cause the wreck of some well-laden ship). Even maritime insurance, which was early thought of, was at first opposed by the Church, considered by it to be an act of impertinence on the part of man to Providence. But neither dangers nor difficulties could prevail. Other countries of Europe were still in darkness when the boldness of Italian navigators had illuminated the Mediterranean.



Trade at the Ports
of Call of the Le-
vant (from an old
woodcut)

To the Venetians belongs the first glory of having maintained a luminous trace of the fallen Western Empire between Italy and the East. Trade had never ceased in the triangle formed by Venice, Constantinople and Egypt. Men of Amalfi had early set off from a nook of the Tyrrhenian coast; the strength of Genoa appeared upon the seas and Pisa raised its vermillion banners in the East. The enterprise and courage of this Italy, urged onward by an unsubdued vitality thirsting for new power, struck out from all shores: the men from Ancona navigated; so did the men of Bari; Comacchio had a name; and the ports of Sicily were the ports of call of the Old World.

The prologue of the Italian Renaissance was on the sea.

When the English ships would not venture any distance from

the home country, considering the Mediterranean too far away, Italian ships calmly went through the Straits of Gibraltar and ploughed the Atlantic. A Venetian mercantile fleet made a journey to England every year, carrying products bought in the East and buying northern products, among which wool was by far the most important; and it was not until 1587 that this annual expedition ceased. But even before the Venetians, the Genoese, who were the most intrepid navigators of the world, had arrived at the ports of Flanders.

Italian navigation of the Middle Ages could not do more for the woollen trade than its still timid producers were doing: the first cloths, of modest quality, were carried to Africa and Asia, where the ships loaded, instead, with materials of notable value, fabrics of silk and gold, goods valuable for their Tyrian purple dye, which was still famous. As has been said, weaving in the Eastern Empire had not suffered the collapse of its western rival, and Byzantium, and afterward the Arabs, maintained contact which was strengthened by the ships of the Italian republics. The luxury fabrics went for the greater part to the churches which bought them from merchant sailors or received them as gifts from pilgrims. Arab curtains hung over the choir of the church of Montecassino before the year 1000. Even places whose name is today unknown to most people were the proud possessors of wares from the East — whence came the Wise Men with precious gifts for Jesus. In Abruzzo, near Francavilla, the Convent of Santa Liberata had two African silk altar carpets about the year 1000. At this period cloth weaving flourished in northern Africa, which was ruled by Mahometan dynasties like the rest of known Africa and a large part of Asia. Even before then Italian ships carried garments from Tripoli, which were greatly appreciated for their fine blue and for a splendid



Cammel-borne
Trade in the East

black that gave them a sumptuous appearance. It was only natural that weaving should have flourished there when it is considered that northern Africa, continuing the tradition of Rome, still reared large numbers of sheep bearing excellent wool. Readers of Florentine records of the Middle Ages will remember that in Florence wool from Garbo was used for the better quality cloths. This Garbo was a Tuscan form of Algarve, which according to some was a district in Spain, or according to others — this would seem more probable — a district in Morocco. Who does not at least remember the name of Garbo from Boccaccio's tale about the happenings of the beautiful Alatiel, daughter of the Prince of Babylon, who on her journey to marry the King of Garbo « fell by divers accidents into the hands of nine men » until « restored to her father as a virgin » managed notwithstanding to marry the husband destined for her? To the Florentines Garbo did not signify a strange country. There had long since existed in Florence a street named « Garbo » with clothes

shops specializing in African and Spanish wools, which were much appreciated and sought after, especially when the economic policy of the English Government made the purchase of northern wool particularly difficult. Brunetto Latini notes that in the Mediterranean the south-west wind was called the « garbin », from Garbo, and « garbino » is still the name this wind bears in lower Italy. « Cloths of Garbo » was the name by which the cloths woven with raw material from Africa were known; and in the opinion of some people it seemed that the name came from the fineness of the fabric, from the « garbo » (Italian for grace, pleasing feature, etc.) of the manufacture.

This eastern trade underwent considerable development at the time of the Crusades, as the military expeditions to the Holy Land were almost a monopoly of Italian navigation, in the same way that the pilgrimages of numerous pious and contrite souls continued to be. Merchants from Venice, Genoa and Pisa, shrewdly combining the sacred with the secular, disembarked warriors ready to die for the liberation and defence of the Holy Sepulchre and on their return loaded up with merchandise from the Levant — spices in general and pepper in particular (which was so dear at that time as to be used as currency in trade, like salt among the Ethiopian peoples), jewellery, dyeing materials, which were then traded in the interior of European countries and along the northern coasts. For a long time the commercial and, as a consequence, the intellectual relations of Europe with the East (with the exception of southern France which, having its own ships, managed for itself) also constituted a quasi-monopoly of the Italians.

These merchants of the Italian republics were at home along the shores of Asia as also along those of Africa from Morocco to Egypt; but along the Asiatic shores they set up establishments,

The Baptistry of
St. John entrusted
to the Woollen
Guild



founded colonies and procured favours and concessions from the emperors of Constantinople or from the crusading princes who had settled in Syria and Palestine. Some founded principalities. They traded and, if necessary, fought, for Italian trade of the Middle Ages often had something of the heroic about it as, for instance, when men like Marco Polo and a host of others — some of whom attained celebrity while others remained in obscurity — pushed forward to the most distant and least known regions among dangers and obstacles of every kind and seemed to extend the confines of the world; or when the Venetians, the Genoese and the Pisans left their bales and registers to take up the sword and aided the Christian princes against the Saracens, naturally presenting their bill afterward in the shape of demands for greater concessions. Sea trading, overseas and colonial, although chiefly attractive for the wealth to be acquired, also had the fascination of adventure.

As has been said, the exportation of Italian fabrics to the East was slight at first, and they were probably traded to Europeans

temporarily resident there or to the poor native families who could not afford to buy the fine Asiatic materials. Production afterward increased, but the demand increased in even greater measure; and Italian merchants met this demand by buying largely from other European countries, from Germany and France and, especially, the Low Countries, where the woollen industry, for the abovementioned reasons, had already developed considerably. Even before the year 1000 Genoa bought from beyond the Alps for the East, and it may be supposed that the Venetians were not behindhand. They bought wool and materials from outside; while the industrial side developed, there was much greater activity on the commercial side. Life in the more important Italian trading centres became leisured and refined. Before 1000 a holy man, probably intentionally exaggerating, reproved the people of Lucca for wearing clothes made with foreign wool and cut in the French style.

French fashions even then! During the Renaissance, on the contrary, it was Italian fashions that were zealously followed by the dandies of France and other parts of Europe, to the usual disgust of the men attached to national habits.

The goods were loaded where they were found and carried where they were needed. Three continents were exploited by the trading ingenuity of the Italians, who knew the rules of the trade and practised them with singular shrewdness and indomitable constancy. This trade, although in part intermediary, also co-operated in raising the fortunes of the Italian woollen industry, with an army of agents throughout the world and the Italic peninsula and an army of workmen from one part of Italy to another.



The Arms of the
Calimala Guild of
Florence

To this universal trade, this dower, based upon foreign industry but not without beneficial effects on the national industry, the woollen industry of Italy has a monument of imperishable fame in the fortunes of the glorious Guild of Calimala, at once commercial and industrial, which carried the prosperity of Florence, along with the city's woollen industry, to great heights.

The Guild got its name from a street in which it had stores and shops and which seems to have been called « calle mala » (evil street) from the fact that at one time it was frequented by prostitutes. The Guild was already in existence in the twelfth century and had broken away from that generic University of Merchants which at one time included all Florentines engaged in small-scale business. Distinctions and independent bodies became necessary in course of time, and with the formation and consolidation of the municipal system the number of guilds increased to twenty-one in all.

The need of association is instinctive in man and is felt more strongly in hard times when personal power is more petty and the domination of the strong over the weak is more hard. The Middle Ages abounded in more or less definite societies, sometimes secret

in order not to offend the ruling powers, and at least open as regards their religious ends, which were not the only ones. The famous guilds of the north, which were the forerunners of the Italian corporations, answered the same need. The name « guild » comes from Germany, where such associations constituted a tie of fidelity and mutual aid and membership was signed in blood, but practically they served to bring the members together for a drinking bout. In the Low Countries they were an increasingly powerful means of defence and then of offence for the merchants and workers, first against the laical or the ecclesiastical princes, then against the patricians and the wealthy middle class, and finally against the big merchants, in periods of furious democracy which were somewhat akin to the social disturbances of our times.

The process was much the same in Florence as in the other Italian municipalities: domestic labour giving way to artisan labour, artisan to industrial; expansion of trade, and a more resolute attitude on the part of the old timid associations. At bottom the municipality itself, at the beginning, was a corporation for protection against feudal excesses; an association of workers and merchants who wished to ensure that the fruit of their labour and freedom of trade should be sheltered from the caprice of feudal authority and the overhanging threat of brute force. This was essentially the motive of the birth and the more complex nature of the guilds. The guilds created wealth and intended that there should be justice. They accordingly had to be big and strong and have a predominant voice in the municipality. When Calimala went to work in the world it represented Florence, with the authority and power of the Republic.

Calimala thus bought raw cloths and dyed and finished them in Florence, where the woollen industry must already have excelled, since certain aptitude and skill cannot be improvised on the spur

of the moment. Florence and Milan were celebrated for dyeing. The Milanese dyers, for example, dyed German cloths centuries before the German dyes achieved world primacy.

The cloths arrived in the classical « torselli » (a kind of elongated bale) and were fullled in the fulling mills erected time before alongside water-courses and operating with mallets moved by the current. They were dyed with determinate dyes according to strict regulations which forbade the use of less expensive and consequently coarser substances; then stretched to make them equal, carded, cut, ironed, and carefully folded; in short, they underwent all those operations which, after the weaving, bring out the good quality of the raw material or give it a more attractive appearance. Thus prepared, the cloths of Calimala were re-sold at three times the price paid for them, a necessarily wide margin in a period when money was dear, when the sums paid to shareholders were such as would make a modern shareholder's mouth water, and when borrowed money had to be remunerated with interest at fifteen, twenty or twenty-five per cent, then considered quite ordinary rates. It was not uncommon for thirty, forty and fifty per cent to be paid. The Church had begun to thunder against usury, by which term it called almost all remuneration of capital. But when the ideal seeks to go beyond human limits, it is humanity that ends by prevailing. Medieval rates of interest were always high and usury was rampant; which, however, did not prevent the conclusion of big and excellent deals, and the industrial and commercial towns waxed fat.

Like every other guild, that of Calimala had its by-laws, and it is feasible that the by-laws of the bigger guilds were more complex, with changes from time to time as experience and new circumstances dictated. In the first half of the fourteenth century, when the Guild was at its apogee, it had two councils, a general