

Julius Kayser, a young immigrant from Europe, arrived in the U.S.A. somewhere in 1880's. He started by making silk gloves and somewhere along the line developed a process which he patented for putting double fingertips at the top of each finger of the glove. He created a slogan "The tips outwear the gloves" and on this foundation built up a large business which later developed into hosiery and then underwear.

The first connection with Australia was made in 1912 when Lionel Marks and Ernest Marks joined forces and traded under the name of L. & E. Marks and started to develop the Kayser franchise for Australia.

The franchise gave them the sole rights to import Kayser goods into Australia which they purchased, imported and distributed as merchants.

Lionel Marks was killed in the Gallipoli landing in 1915. Ernest Marks carried on the business under the above title until 1920 when the firm was made into a proprietary company and J. Saulwick was taken in as a share holder and director and the name of the firm was changed to L. & E. Marks and Saulwick Proprietary Limited.

The company continued to import, in ever increasing quantities, hosiery, underwear and gloves, chiefly of the Kayser brand, from U.S.A. while substantial quantities of cotton fabric gloves also were imported from the Kayser factory in Chemitz, Germany.

The type of hosiery imported in the early post first war years was of the cut and sewed type which was known as "Italian Silk". These stockings were cut from heavy^{weight} flat knitted pure silk fabric, cut and trimmed to shape and sewn up. Knitted hosiery of pure silk appeared in the early 1920's and was of the "ingrain" type, that is - they were knitted on full-fashioned machines from dyed yarns.

This process was followed shortly afterwards with what was then called "the dip dye" process by which the stockings were knitted "in the grey" and dyed and finished afterwards.

About 1923 the New Zealand market was opened up and an office was started in Wellington. Shortly afterwards another office was opened in Auckland, which became the head office, with a branch in Dunedin. Mr. Lionel Clabburn was released from the Australian organization and had charge of the New Zealand branch which imported its supplies direct from North America under the direction of the Melbourne company.

During the 1920's the business grew in both Australia and New Zealand to very substantial proportions. Permanent branch offices and distributing centres were opened in Perth, Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart as well as the distributing centre in Sydney which was established in the early days of the company's activities.

During the whole of this period the company was undoubtedly by far the leading importer and distributor of silk hosiery in the Commonwealth and New Zealand, and the same applied to fabric gloves, i.e. gloves made of other than leather.

In 1926 the Federal Government placed practically prohibitive duties on the importation of silk and cotton undergarments from abroad. This section of the company's activities had to be abolished although the overall volume continued to expand.

In November 1929 the Federal Government placed prohibitive duties on the importation of women's hosiery and the Australian company persuaded the parent company in New York to ship plant and machinery to build a factory for the manufacture of stockings in Australia. Land was purchased in Richmond, Victoria, and building was commenced in the early part of 1930. The Australian Knitting Mills (A.K.M.) became partners and took up a minor share holding in the company which was known as Julius Kayser (Aust.) Pty. Ltd.

The first Chairman of the new company which was registered as Julius Kayser (Aust.) Pty. Ltd. was the late Mr. F.F. Robinson of A.K.M. and Yarra Falls Ltd., who, however, was succeeded a little later, when the American Company purchased the minority shareholding of the A.K.M. - Yarra Falls group by Mr. H.D. Giddy who guided the new company from

its early years to its top place in its special field in the Australian economy.

The late Mr. Arthur Phillips, who was succeeded by Mr. J. Forrest and also the late Mr. Percy Danly were members of the Board of the Company from its earlier formative years.

The first stockings came off the machines in the early part of 1931 and in 1932 and the first standard stocking to be advertised throughout Australia under the slogan of "Lucky Ladies of 1932" was distributed by the new Australian Kayser company in the middle of that year. The stocking was of 8 thread silk with a cotton top of 2/50 mercerised cotton and was retailed at 4/11 per pair, giving the retailers a full markup.

Gloves continued to be imported from the Kayser factories overseas and underwear merchandised from Australian factories, manufactured on a royalty basis under the Kayser trademark.

By the middle of 1930's the Australian company was producing over 15% of the total Australian full-fashioned hosiery production and, at this time, the company set up its own underwear manufacturing facilities in a property which was purchased adjoining the hosiery factory.

Early in 1937 Julius Saulwick, who had been joint Managing Director with Ernest Marks, died and the company was controlled and directed by Ernest Marks as sole Managing Director. Just prior to the outbreak of the war in September 1939 the company had been marketing for some months a six thread full-fashioned silk stocking with a cotton top at the retail price of 3/11 per pair, with a full markup to the retailer, and under the Kayser brand, and on a payable basis to the company. This was generally hailed as an achievement - which was equalled by only one other (at that time, small competitive company).

During the war years the company's activities were diversified and, as well as stockings and underwear, which were manufactured in strict Government controlled austerity standards, tents,

jungle trousers, mosquito nets, air force helmets and jackets and other military equipment was manufactured for the Defence Department in substantial quantities.

With the ending of the war in August 1945 came the advent of nylon yarn, firstly used to supplant silk for hosiery and shortly afterwards to take the place of rayon in the underwear field.

By 1950 the company was certainly the largest producer and manufacturer of nylon underwear largely due to the ability, imagination and foresight of the late Phil Hayman, a working Director and Sales Manager of the company, who was then also in charge of underwear production.

For the next four or five years the company maintained and enlarged its supremacy in the nylon underwear field and held its prominent position in the production and sale of full-fashioned hosiery.

The writer of the foregoing retired in June 1954 after 42 years active association and control of the distribution^{and manufacture} of "Kayser" production on the Australian market.