

PEARL SALES DUE TO BREAK RECORD

Queen Mother's Visit Helped
—F.T.C. Criticized as Lax
on Abuses in Trade

By GEORGE AUERBACH

The demand for cultured pearls is improving and retail volume this year will top the record level of 1953, importers predict. Promotional efforts by major concerns to increase fashion acceptance of the gem have made pearls more popular than ever.

The recent visit of the Queen Mother of England helped arouse interest in pearls. She appeared in public wearing three-strand necklaces in opera lengths. Sales of that item improved immediately.

Inexpensive ropes of imitation pearls were very popular this year, but did not hurt the sale of quality items. Single and double strand necklaces and cultured earrings were in demand.

Nine-millimeter and larger cultured pearls are in tight supply and prices are higher than normal, according to David Goldstone, executive vice president of the Imperial Pearl Syndicate. The supply of three-to-eight-millimeter graduated necklaces is limited and may become higher, he added.

Japan has increased shipments of small and medium pearls but not that of full round gems in larger sizes. Two large purchases of medium-sized pearls for distribution through PX's have cut the supply of that weight.

According to Mr. Goldstone, the Federal Trade Commission has been lax in enforcing trade practice rules for the industry. While the use of trade names for paste pearls that imply they are cultured has abated, many detail outlets offer necklaces "reduced" from unrealistic prices, he said.

Scarcely a week passes that an advertisement does not appear announcing the reduction of a cultured pearl necklace from a ridiculously high price, he said. Often, Mr. Goldstone added, the new price is higher than the normal market value.

"It is about time the Federal Trade Commission took action to prevent the misrepresentation of pearl values," Mr. Goldstone said. "The rules that can protect the public from fictitious reductions were passed more than a year ago. These rules should be enforced or taken off the books."

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