

St. Gall... a vocational training centre : the School of Textiles and Fashion of the Museum of Arts and Crafts

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English Officers in Central Training Course for Alpine Winter Instruction of the Swiss Army.

On February 15th, one hundred and fifty officers from all army units started the training course in alpine winter instruction at Andermatt. In this course, which is completed in summer by a course for summer alpine instruction, suitable officers are selected to be commanders, instructors or detachment leaders. This course, which lasts two weeks, is also attended by six English officers, who take the opportunity to study our alpine methods. In exchange, Swiss officers attend instruction courses and training camps in the English Army and thus gain valuable experience and knowledge from which our national defence will benefit. After termination of the central course, the English officers will take part, in pairs, during another week in the annual alpine repetition course of the Army Units.

The Number of Workers in Swiss Manufacturing Industries.

Switzerland is a highly-industrialised country, although most people don't think of it that way. They believe that Switzerland is only a land of mountains and lakes. There are numerous industries in Switzerland at the moment, which use the most modern methods known to technical research. The number of factory workers has increased more than half since pre-war times; while in 1937 360,000 workers were employed in 8300 establishments, not less than 546,000 men worked in 11,500 concerns in 1951. The significance of these figures is stressed by the fact that Switzerland has only 4½ million inhabitants.

Prosperity in the Swiss Embroidery Industry.

1951 has been a year of prosperity for the Swiss embroidery industry. There are now 860 embroidering machines in Switzerland working full time, some of them overtime, to catch up with orders. The hand embroidery industry is also prospering. Today, embroidery in clothing, handkerchiefs and linens is in fashion again. In 1951, Switzerland has exported embroideries worth approximately 93 million francs.

Cement Manufacturers Keep Their Prices Low.

Switzerland has used a great deal of cement in 1951, even more than in 1950, which was a record year for the cement business. It is significant thus, that Swiss cement manufacturers raised their prices by 5 per cent. only for the second half of the year while coal prices, e.g., increased 35 per cent., salaries went up, and even the paper bags used for the packing of cement became more expensive. The result is that one ton of Swiss cement now costs ten francs less than a ton bought in a neighbouring country.

The 50th Anniversary of the Swiss Federal Railways.

The Swiss Federal Railways are this year celebrating their fiftieth anniversary. Here are a few figures which will help to explain the extent of this national railway system. The total length of the Federal railway network is approximately 2000 miles. Another 2000 miles are operated by private companies. Only some 60 miles of the nationally-owned lines are still used for steam transportation. Because of the geography of the country, the network includes over 3000 railway bridges and 240 tunnels, the longest of which is the Simplon Tunnel with a total length of 12 miles.

New Types of Watches to be Exhibited at the Industries Fair in Basle.

The watch exhibit shown at the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle has become quite famous in recent years and has attracted increasing numbers of representatives from wholesale and retail establishments who visit the Industries Fair. This year several new items of interest will be exhibited. Not less than four new types of jewelled watches will be shown. Moreover, there will be new types of automatic watches with various patented devices. One of the new models, especially built for engineers, can be used not only as a watch, but also as a slide-rule; in addition to the usual logarithmic scales, it has scales for cubic values and tangents.

Business Turnover in Retail Sales.

1951 retail sales in this country were 6 per cent. higher than in the previous year. This rise in turnover was distributed almost equally among the different branches of business.

ST. GALL . . . A VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

The School of Textiles and Fashion of the Museum of Arts and Crafts, St-Gail, by Dr. P. Quensel, director.

At the present moment, the artist who wishes to design for the textile industry must satisfy requirements as numerous as they are varied and must possess technical and artistic abilities of a high order. The rapidity of the changes taking place in the field of fashion and in the economic situation demands on his part exceptional powers of adaptation and renewal. It is not surprising therefore that vocational training and development in this field defy all schematic formalism and cannot form part of any programme of instruction intended for the general public.

Under these circumstances, the vocational school fulfils its function when it is capable of giving young men and women special technical knowledge as well as general artistic training, in such a way that in practice the effective collaboration of all those concerned makes possible the creation of textile products which will bear the most critical examination.

Among the Swiss institutes for vocational training in the field of textiles, the St. Gall School of Textiles and Fashion is the ideal vocational and further training school for future textile artists and those who are already working in this field. They find here the guidance and technical facilities that they need in order to perfect their training in certain respects; here, if they work hard, they can acquire the necessary grounding for success in their profession, as designers for the embroidery and fabric printing industries, as hand embroideresses and embroideresses on "Lorraine" machines for the decoration of outer- and underwear, as cutters, dress designers and forewomen in establishments making ready-to-wear and made to measure clothing.

It is 65 years since the St. Gall school started in its red brick building in Vadian Street. "The pleasure of seeing the school and the Museum at last housed together in large well-built and well-appointed premises, ready to go forward together towards their future development, was evident among all sections of the population. In the course of the celebrations organised on this occasion,

the gratitude of the public was eloquently shown towards both builders and sponsors." The main thanks for this achievement are due to the St. Gall Chamber of Commerce. They were far-sighted enough to understand the interests of the embroidery industry which was developing at the time and was in urgent need of men and women designers.

But times have changed since then and the syllabus had to be adapted to meet new requirements. The old vocational classes were reorganised on a smaller scale to form one textile section, and about 1930 a fashion section was added to this in order to meet the demands of the clothing industry. These two sections, each completing the other by their close collaboration, today form the St. Gall School of Textiles and Fashion. Their programme includes everything from the making of the plan of the weave to the finished material and its transformation into clothing. In this way the danger of amateurism, to which the fashion professions are exposed, is avoided. Many people, full of confidence in their own talents, do not realise how much real knowledge is needed to put original ideas into effect and give them form and colour.

It is easy enough to learn the technical side of an industry and the artisanal basis of a trade sufficiently well to earn a living. But fashions are continually changing. This constant evolution demands new ideas for fabric designs and styles; artistic ideas are needed. Is inspiration something that can be learnt? Certainly, as long as there is a foundation of artistic talent. But in addition to this, it is necessary for sight and taste to be continually trained and for instruction to be given by example during practical work.

It is necessary therefore for a vocational school to have continually at its disposal new, rich and varied resources and equipment. Switzerland does not possess for example the enormous means that are at the disposal of British centres of information and vocational training for the textile industry. Yet, with the modest means at its disposal, the St. Gall Fashion School is also working towards the solution of the same problems.

A well-stocked library makes it possible to gain technical information rapidly; in it are found works devoted not only to the decorative arts and industry, but also to all that is remotely connected with fashion and textiles, particularly the most up-to-date works, periodicals and reproduction sheets relating to textiles and fashion. Here is a veritable mine of ideas and suggestions in both the technical and artistic fields; and for anyone who knows how to make use of the material put at his disposal, there is the possibility of gaining the most valuable experience.

The "Studio," with its collections of samples which are continually brought up to date, is working towards the same end. A special section, the famous "Ikle collection," shows laces, embroideries, figured and printed fabrics, costumes and ornaments from all the countries of Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. For an industry in which the "taste" factor plays such an important role, this studio has a special value of up-to-dateness as a basis for putting new ideas into effect or for the training of young designers who, through an acquaintance with old documents and their classical forms, may be led, particularly in the embroidery industry, along the path to the creation of novelties.

Here we must say just a few more words concerning the activity of the Exhibitions Section. The close collaboration existing between the instructional establishment and the centre of studies and information makes it very simple for the institute to fulfil its tasks of propaganda for the Swiss textile industries. If the products of these industries have aroused general admiration for many years at international fairs and exhibitions as well as at the Swiss Industries Fair at Basle, this is due, and

not least of all to the attractive manner in which the lace, embroidery and fabrics have been displayed. The arrangement of the objects displayed, the elegance of the models, the originality of the designs and the play of colours and drapes gives an attractive overall effect and a fine unity. The St. Gall School of Textiles and Fashion has contributed its share to these results.

The three points of the programme, instruction, information and propaganda outline the tasks in the field of which the Institute makes its practical contribution with a view to furthering the industrial development of Switzerland.

NOTICE TO INTENDING TRAVELLERS

Due to the difficulties experienced in the past by Swiss nationals who have travelled away from New Zealand, and who subsequently have wished to return, it is thought desirable to draw the attention of all intending travellers to the fact that before leaving New Zealand they should make application to a Collector of Customs for a Certificate of Registration authorising their readmission to New Zealand. The procedure is for the traveller to produce their passport with two photographs of passport size and complete a written application. The period of validity of the certificate granted is shown on the face of the certificate, and the holder is permitted to return to New Zealand provided that on arrival back at a New Zealand port they establish their identity and the certificate is still valid.

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