

Spring conference of the Manchester Textile Institute in Bale

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SPRING CONFERENCE OF THE MANCHESTER TEXTILE INSTITUTE IN BÂLE.

Accepting the invitation of the Bâle Chamber of Commerce, the English Textile Institute held its Spring Conference in Bâle from May 17th to 20th.

The English guests, numbering with their ladies over one hundred, had arrived in Bâle during the Whitsun holidays, attending on Tuesday evening at the Stadthaus the opening reception, thoughtfully arranged for the purpose of acquainting guests and hosts previous to the official functions due to commence the following day. The guests were welcomed in a spirited address by the President of the Bâle Chamber of Commerce, Mr. R. Sarasin-Vischer, who expressed the hope that this exceptional opportunity of free personal intercourse between leading English and Swiss representatives of a highly developed industry would have mutually beneficial results.

There were present at the reception, in addition to Col. McConnell (the President of the Textile Institute) and the visiting members, Sir George Paish, joint editor of "The Statist" and leading authority on financial and industrial economics, Mr. A. C. Haag, the British Consul in Bâle, the President and Secretary of the British Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland, Mr. C. R. Paravicini, the Swiss Minister in London, Mr. X. Castelli, the General Manager of the Swiss Bank Corporation in London, the President of the Bâle Regierungsrat, the Vice-President of the Bürgererrat, the Pro-Rector of the Bâle University, representatives of Swiss economic Corporations and leading personalities of the commercial and industrial circles of Bâle.

On Wednesday morning, May 18th, the Conference members assembled at the Bernoullianum to hear the reading of Sir George Paish's paper on "The World's Financial and Economic Situation," and the paper by Mr. Werner Stauffacher, director of the Sandoz Chem. Works, on "The Dye Industry and its Future" (an extract from the latter, owing to lack of space, has to be reserved for publication in our next issue). After luncheon the British representatives of the textile industry, divided into three sections, paid visits of inspection to various industrial concerns, such as the Stückfärberei A.G., Chemische Fabrik vorm. Sandoz, and Gesellschaft für Chemische Industrie, partaking of tea at the establishments named; while the ladies of the Conference members were entertained to tea at the Hotel "Drei Könige" by the British Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland, this pleasant function being attended by the British Minister in Berne, the Hon. Th. Russell, and the British Consul in Bâle.

In the evening there followed at the Stadtkasino the official banquet by the Bâle Chamber of Commerce in honour of the representatives of the Textile Institute, the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. Ed. Schulthess, addressing the imposing assembly in the following words:

"The Swiss Government has warmly welcomed the decision of the Chamber of Commerce of Basle to invite the Manchester Textile Institute to hold their annual Congress this year in this city, and I personally feel a special satisfaction in availing myself of the opportunity—which I owe to the invitation kindly addressed to me—or offering to our English guests the greetings of Switzerland and of her Government.

"England and Switzerland are united by traditional ties of a most cordial friendship. Switzerland knows that at all times she may rely upon Great Britain as a trustworthy friend who is studying her peculiar situation with a feeling of sympathy and understanding and who endeavours to appreciate her efforts. Switzerland is regularly visited by thousands of British subjects, and I may well assume that many of them may be counted as admirers of our country. On the other hand, a great many

Swiss seek and find in England and her vast colonies matter for thought and education, and frequently, moreover, their life's happiness. The generous views of the British nation have afforded many of our countrymen an opportunity for making themselves a position in their midst; all these Swiss are unanimous in their grateful recognition of the liberality with which they have always been received throughout the British Empire.

"Even if the constitutions of the two countries may differ in their external form, Englishmen and Swiss are united in their common conceptions of liberty and in their notions about the value of personality as well as in their common ideas on the development of democracy, which, in both countries, is deeply rooted and strongly supported by a faithfully cherished tradition.

"The very fact that the Textile Institute of Manchester have consented to hold their Congress in Switzerland, and more especially at Basle, affords a proof, if proofs were wanted, of the importance of the relations which up to this day unite the commerce of our two countries. Similarly as in the great commercial centres of England, you can witness at Basle the existence of an ancient mercantile community whose origin and development can be traced back many centuries. Side by side with the commerce of Basle a powerful industry has of late sprung up, which, by its produce, entertains a lively trade, especially with the textile industries of England. It is true, however, that at this moment this industry is seriously handicapped by the heavy crisis which lies upon the economic system of the world—a result of the Great War and its attendant circumstances.

"Switzerland—situated in the heart of Europe and encircled all around by war-waging nations, who sustained, during the last years, tremendous losses in human lives and in property—could not be spared the economic crisis. She shares in the fate of the European Continent, which, for a long time to come, seems to be doomed to a state of restlessness.

"Switzerland fully realises, however, to what extent fortune has favoured her in preserving her from war. She does not lose her courage and energy amidst the difficulties of the present time. Knowing that above all hard work and efficiency can turn the wheel of fortune, she encourages, also officially, the development of her national production and of her commercial relations. Foreign countries are often inclined to believe that countries which, like Switzerland, remained neutral, have benefited by the Great War. Let me assure you of the absolute fact that even if Switzerland values at a low figure all the losses sustained by Swiss citizens in foreign countries, the damages inflicted upon the most important branches of her industry, and the shortage of work and the unemployment which has ensued from the general crisis, and if she calculates highly, on the other hand, the advantages drawn from her exportation during the years of the war, her balance yet registers a very heavy loss. Let us hope that now we may be upon the eve of a period of more normal political development, which will afford, to individuals and to nations alike, the occasion and the possibility of putting all their energies to the test. I sincerely hope that in this period our traditional and time-honoured cordial relations with Great Britain will be maintained and will grow, and I trust that the commercial links also will be forged tighter and become more valuable for both countries.

"I ask you to take with you from our small country the impression—which I should also wish you to impart to other citizens of your great Empire—that England only numbers friends in Switzerland, and that Switzerland is full of a feeling of warm sympathy for your country. I ask you further to accept the expression of Switzerland's gratitude for everything the British nation and the British Government have done for us, also during the world war.

"I lift my glass to the honour of Great Britain, its King and its people, and of the future of Anglo-Swiss friendship."

The speech concluded, the orchestra played the British and Swiss national anthems, the whole gathering rising on the occasion.

The second speaker, the British Minister, the Hon. Th. Russell, warmly thanked the Bâle Chamber of Commerce for the invitation to be present on this occasion, and assured his countrymen that they would find many good friends in Switzerland.

Referring to the serious industrial and economic dispute in England, which he hoped would soon terminate in a permanent and satisfactory settlement, the speaker mentioned that Switzerland also is suffering from the conse-

quences and aftermath of the world war, and that it was especially gratifying to him that, despite all the difficulties of the times, the ancient and friendly relations between the two countries had not, as a consequence, been slackened, but, on the contrary, further fortified. Neither the distance between the two countries nor the differences in language and customs have tended to break a friendship cultivated for over five centuries. Never shall the generosity of the Swiss nation be forgotten which so many of his countrymen were able to enjoy during and after the war. The able speaker then emphasized the necessity of close commercial relations between all nations, in particular between Switzerland and Great Britain. The present Textile Institute Conference would add another stone to the building up of these relations, in connection wherewith tribute also is due to the Swiss Minister in London, Mr. C. R. Paravicini, for his great and successful efforts in this direction. Concluding, the British Minister raised his glass to the prosperity of the Swiss Confederation and its President.

Then followed speeches by the President of the Bâle Chamber of Commerce, Mr. R. Sarasin-Vischer; the Regierungsrat President, Dr. A. Brenner; the Swiss Minister in London, Mr. C. R. Paravicini; the President of the Textile Institute, Col. F. R. McConnell, who warmly thanked the various speakers for their kindly references addressed to the members of the Textile Institute, on whose behalf it gave him especial pleasure to convey to the Bâle Chamber of Commerce a vote of most sincere thanks, as all the members of the Institute who had accepted their cordial invitation had been convinced by the amiable reception and the attentions of the local Press that they had indeed found many good friends in Bâle.

It was considerably past midnight when the gathering broke up, favourably impressed by the various speeches, which were opportunely intermitted with exquisite songs rendered by the soloquartette of the Liedertafel, and the entirely successful arrangements for the evening.

On Thursday morning the second series of lectures again attracted to the Bernoullianum the members of the Textile Institute, representatives of the Bâle Chamber of Commerce and of Bâle and other Swiss industrial circles. Mr. John Crompton lectured with the ability of the expert on "The Structure of Textile Fabrics," which was followed by a free discussion, during which Mr. Robert Stehli-Zweifel (Zurich), delegate of the Swiss Commercial and Industrial Association, gave comprehensive information on the silk industry of Zurich.

Then Dr. E. Tissot read his paper on "The economic importance of Switzerland's waterpower and waterways," winding up his exceedingly interesting lecture with the following words: "We fully recognise the enormous political power of Great Britain, whose past history imparts confidence especially to small nations, giving them encouragement to carry to a good end great undertakings destined to benefit and satisfy also other nations."

Thursday afternoon and evening again provided relaxation from the strenuous business programme, the hours between luncheon and tea being devoted to inspection of the town's historic and art treasures, under the eminent guidance of such experts as Prof. Dr. Stückelberg; Prof. A. H. Schmid and Dr. R. Burckhardt. At 4 p.m. the British guests assembled on the Münsterplatz, from where the party was conveyed by 30 private automobiles to Dr. R. Geigy's country seat "Bäumlihof." Unfortunately, a sudden downpour interfered with the projected garden party and the visitors were forced to take refuge and tea indoors. However, this contretemps did not damp the high spirit of the guests, as became evident from the fact that after

being addressed in a few kindly words of welcome by the host, Dr. Geigy, who remarked that it had been thought opportune to enable the British guests to obtain a glimpse of Swiss home life, they cheered the host to the echo and sang "For he's a jolly good fellow" with great gusto before taking leave.

In the evening the Conference members and guests from home and abroad resorted to the Sommerkasino, where an entertainment of typically "baslerisch" character provided an abundance of merriment and enjoyment, unquestionably delighting especially the foreign guests.

Friday, the last day of the Conference, was very appropriately destined by the Bâle Chamber of Commerce to visibly impress the British guests by means of inspection of the Rhine, its Bâle port and dock installations, demonstrating in the most practical form not only the suitability and desirability, but the direct necessity for a navigable Rhine, with Bâle as its port for Central Europe.

At the final luncheon the President of the Bâle Chamber of Commerce tendered his special thanks to the lecturers of the Conference: Sir George Paish, Messrs. John Crompton, Werner Stauffacher and Dr. T. Tissot. In alluding to the excellent principles laid down in his speeches by the eminent President of the Textile Institute, Mr. Sarasin wished to mention that these were not only highly appreciated, but also fully endorsed in Bâle, which offers heart and hand for future co-operation, trusting that all who had honoured Bâle with their presence felt convinced of having there found many true friends.

Responding, the President of the Textile Institute, Col. McConnell, in the name of his countrymen offered most sincere thanks for the boundless hospitality extended to them during their stay, a hospitality which had been mingled with a personal touch that went straight to the heart of the prosaic Englishman. As a small token of recognition and sympathy Col. McConnell proceeded to declare as Honorary Members of the Textile Institute: Mr. R. Sarasin-Vischer, President of the Bâle Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Leopold Dubois, President of the Swiss Bank Corporation, Mr. Werner Stauffacher, Director of the Sandoz Works, and Dr. Rudolf Geigy, President of J. R. Geigy, Ltd.

Several of the English guests also rose to express personally their hearty thanks, sincere appreciation and their warm friendship for Bâle and Switzerland. Sir George Paish, emphasizing the importance of these international meetings, stated that in Bâle a beginning was made with the work of healing the world's wounds at a time when the world was falling to pieces owing to lack of goodwill.

A visit in the afternoon to the Bâle Electric Power Station Augst terminated the Spring Conference of the Textile Institute, most of whose visiting members prepared for extensively touring Switzerland. They will gain further information and insight about our country, the beauty spots of which will also incidentally afford them well-earned rest and distraction after the strenuous days passed in Bâle.

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Congratulations and praise are due to the Bâle Chamber of Commerce and all who have co-operated to make the arrangements a complete success.

It is a step in the right direction and one that should go far towards still further improving existing relations between Great Britain and Switzerland.

Considering the significance of the mutual interests which were involved in the Bâle Conference it seems a pity that the meeting and the important speeches made on the occasion by responsible authorities on both sides have not found a wider echo in the London daily press.