

Dr. Ruefenacht on the new British tariff

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It is seemingly evident that humanity has not reached its *Easter* yet. We are still in deep winter. We begin to understand slowly and painfully that there is a *Solidarity* which chains the various members of the human family together in iron chains, chains which are unbreakable, the chains of hunger, want, despair, of acute suffering and misery.

It may well be that poor humanity, so slow to learn from experience, must be made to feel, if it won't heed!

It may be too that after some time of misery, pain and trouble, Humanity will really begin to wonder why this *Solidarity* should not be made into a *Solidarity* of peaceful enjoyment?

If there is *Solidarity* — and who lives there to-day who could still be blind to the fact that if one member of the human family suffers, all the others suffer too? — why then, in Heaven's name, all this economical and political separation, why all this stupid Nationalism, why all these jealousies from one Nation to the other, from one country to the other?

Why endure Solidarity, instead of enjoying it?

That is my Easter-Query. Ask yourself the question and try to answer it, fearlessly and honestly, and in doing so, you will not only come nearer towards understanding the command of our Lord 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise,' but you may help, each in its place, a little bit towards preparing the way towards the desired goal.

DR. RUEFENACHT ON THE NEW BRITISH TARIFF.

AN N.S.H. DISCUSSION.

An interesting discussion on the new British Customs Duties and their effect on the Swiss exporting industries was initiated at the last monthly meeting of the London Groupe of the New Helvetic Society by Dr. W. Rüfenacht, who has recently taken over Dr. Rezzonico's work at our Legation. He gave a short, but very lucid account of the historic change in Britain's trade policy and of the present position of the numerous import duties. Being mainly occupied with Anglo-Swiss trade matters, Dr. Rüfenacht could speak with especial authority on the theme of his causerie. We hope, therefore, to publish his exposé of this all important subject-matter in an early issue of the Swiss Observer.

The main facts resulting from the recent political changes in Great Britain are only too well known. Ever since the Great War, quite a number of the most important Swiss export goods have been subjected to heavy import duties in England, be it under the McKenna-duties, the Key Industries Duties or the Safeguarding or Industries Duties. Dyestuffs have furthermore been subjected to severe import restrictions. Then, last Summer, came the drop of the pound, increasing the costs of Swiss imports in terms of English currency by no less than 40 to 50 per cent., and cheapening English exports, part of which compete with Swiss exports and the Swiss home industries, by about 30 per cent., as expressed in Swiss francs. On top of this heavy valuta-handicap, having the same effect as equally high duties and English export subsidies, were in November and December imposed the prohibitive Abnormal Importations Duties of 50 per cent. Now, since March 1st, all imports, excepting only a few raw materials and foodstuffs, pay a 10 per cent. duty, which the previously existing duties are maintained and additional duties to any amount may be imposed on any goods by the Government on the advice of the Tariff Commission.

Until the currency depreciation has communicated itself in a major degree to the British production and distribution costs, the foreign importers cannot hope to sell more than a fraction of their previous turnover in England. A few foreign firms have already started producing in England, and more will no doubt follow as the tariff walls are increasing. But this transplantation of industries, discouraged in Switzerland by the prohibition of the export of used machinery, is a costly, risky and slow process. Where it is feasible, manufacturing licences are sold to English firms. The most desirable part solution of the new problems would no doubt be new trade agreements between England and low tariff Continental countries, including Switzerland, for tariff preferences and a lowering of the duties generally. But England will not engage in treaty negotiations until after the Empire Economic Conference at Ottawa in July next. The possibility of Great Britain being able to force the highly protectionist countries of Europe and America to moderate their duties is the only consoling feature in this deplorable change of affairs which has set in since last summer. But it is to be feared that the currency-handicap to the importer from gold-standard countries and the currency advantage to the English exporter will only slowly disappear, whatever tariff arrangements may ultimately be come to.

Dr.E.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

SWISS CLUB "SCHWEIZERBUND." ANNUAL DINNER.

The practice inaugurated recently by another club in introducing "Swiss time" seems to recommend itself to our compatriots. The committee of the Schweizerbund had advertised its Annual Banquet to take place on Friday, the 18th inst., at 8 p.m., but it was well after nine o'clock when the company sat down to dinner. This tardiness was no doubt due in some measure to the liberal way in which the official guests who had all arrived in good time were entertained to the traditional "appetizers;" in fact, it may have been a happy forethought of the organizers to give our new diplomatic representative, M. Ruefenacht, ample opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the leading members of the other institutions in our Colony.

The chair was occupied by M. Ruefenacht, Secretary of Legation, and after the customary toasts of "The King" and "La Patrie" had been honoured, Mr. J. Christen, the President of the Club, rose and extended a hearty welcome to M. Ruefenacht, the official representative of the Legation. He continued by expressing his satisfaction at the large gathering which to him was all the more gratifying as the colleagues on his committee had exhibited some qualms over the holding of their banquet. Personally he held the opinion that it would have been a crime to break with the tradition and to set aside an annual event which the founders of the club and its predecessors had always considered an outstanding feature of their activities. If it had been found expedient to arrange the dinner on modest lines and to cut out champagne and coronas he was sure this would not interfere with the enjoyment. They had only one policy: to offer their members and friends "a home from home." Present conditions were somewhat irritating; he would not bore them with items of their balance sheet; he would only say that in normal times, it was an easy matter and a perfect pleasure to be President, Secretary or Steward of the Club. Mr. Christen terminated his address by asking the company to drink to the further prosperity of the "Schweizerbund."

Mr. H. Caluori, the Vice-President, submitted the toast to the official guests who were M. Marchand and M. Zimmermann (City Swiss Club), M. and Mme. Martin (Secours Mutuels), Mr. Lucca and Mr. Moresi (Unione Ticinese), Mr. and Mrs. Lettmann (Swiss Mercantile Society) Mr. Borgeaud and Miss Borgeaud (Union Helvetia), Dr. and Mrs. Egli (Nouvelle Society Helvétique), Mr. and Mrs. Staufner (Swiss Choral Society), Mr. and Mrs. Wagner (Swiss Institute Orchestra), Mr. DeBrunner (Swiss Rifle Association), Mr. Brun and Mr. Reimann (Swiss Club Birmingham), the Rev. and Mrs. Halm (Swiss Church) and Mr. and Mrs. Boehringer (Swiss Observer).

The "Bachelor" who was in charge of the toast to "The Ladies" was missing. In the words of the President, he had developed at the last moment, cold feet, a toothache and a stiff neck. Mr. Christen stepped into the breach; he compared the ladies present to a bed of white lilies and created general hilarity by jocularly enlarging on the beauties and frailties of these flowers.

M. Ruefenacht, who on rising was greeted by general acclamation, tendered the sincere regret of the Minister, M. Paravicini, at having been unable to attend owing to an important engagement. The Minister's misfortune was his good luck as it afforded him — M. Ruefenacht — the opportunity of spending a most enjoyable evening amongst compatriots. He was thereby also privileged to personally congratulate a few members of the "Schweizerbund" on having been rewarded honorary membership for long and loyal services rendered. They were: V. Albrecht, W. Hausermann, M. Girard, G. A. Blank, L. Koch and H. Schweitzer.

M. Pache, who throughout the evening had acted as toastmaster, regretted that in the distribution of honours the ladies were omitted: he felt that without their active support and co-operation the Club could not exist. It would not be delicate if he referred to their long services, but he could not help singling out Mrs. Scheidegger, Mrs. Horn, Mrs. Wetter, Mrs. Bernhard, Mrs. Keller and Mrs. Nanzer, and from the younger generation Mrs. Delaloye.

Mr. Lehmann closed the official part of the evening by returning thanks on behalf of the guests for the hospitality offered by the Club.

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