

The Zurich silk conditioning house

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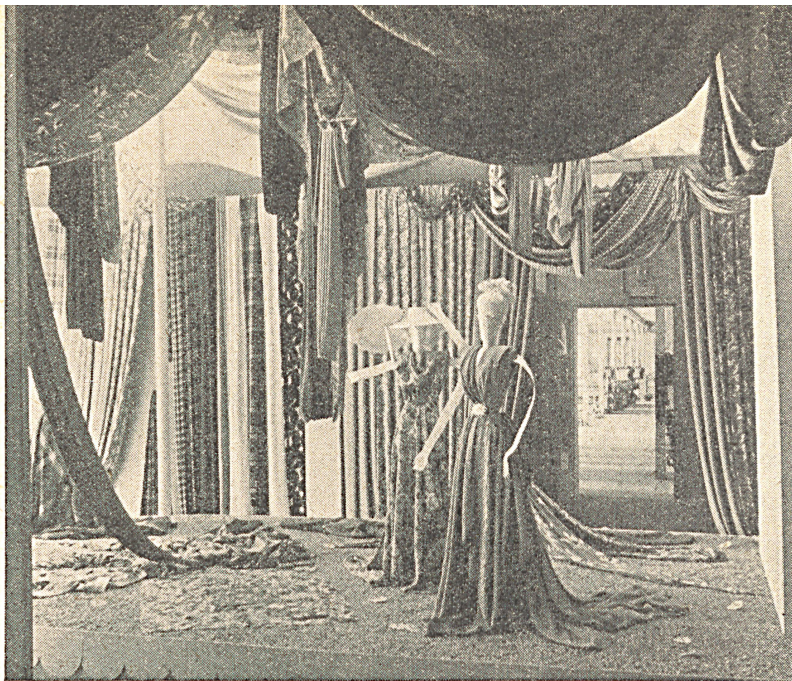
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Two Jubilees in the Silk Industry

LAST summer, two of Switzerland's leading silk manufacturers celebrated their centenary anniversary: *Seidenwarenfabrik vorm. Edwin Naef A.-G.* and *Seidenstoffwebereien vorm. Gebrüder Naef A.-G.*, both of Zurich. The similarity in the names of these two firms is not due to mere chance; both have sprung from the same origin, the silk weaving mills founded by Johann Rudolf Naef in 1846. About 40 years later, the founder's two sons decided to run the firm's mills as separate concerns.

Both firms celebrated their centenary in which they invited their staff to take part. *Seidenstoffwebereien* organized an interesting retrospective exhibition to which about 100 guests were invited and taken also on a tour of the Affoltern mills near Zurich; the visit was followed by a dinner offered by the Management. Our illustration shows a corner of the exhibition. In our next number, we shall have occasion to deal at greater length with the important part these hundred-year old firms have played in the development of the Swiss textile industry.



The Zurich Silk Conditioning House

has celebrated its 100th anniversary this year. In a very fine centenary publication, Mr. Hans Jenny has not only evoked those 100 years in the story of the Zurich silk industry, a story with which the House is closely connected, but he takes us back to yet earlier times and gives a most complete picture of the industry as a whole, the origins of which can be traced to the year 1237, when the first deal in raw silk was concluded between Zurich and Como.

After a complete decline in the early years of the XVth century, the silk trade and industry revived and flourished in Zurich, developing in most extraordinary fashion, particularly during the latter half of the XIXth century. It was at this period that Zurich manufacturers and merchants founded the «Conditioning House», a step they were obliged to take as a result of the expansion of their trade; previously, conditioning had been operated by foreign establishments (the first to be founded being that of Turin in 1724).

Silk is, in effect, very hygroscopic and its weight varies quite a lot according to the humidity contained in the air. This fact must be taken into consideration when any deal is made, if later claims are to be avoided. The only method which can give every guarantee in this respect is the process known as «conditioning». The operation consists in reducing samples to absolute dryness in order to determine the proportion of water present; the theoretical weight of the silk can thus be calculated on the

basis of a water content of 11%, an international standard.

The Zurich Conditioning House grew very rapidly and was occupied chiefly with local and transit custom — the certificates it delivers are recognized internationally — but the first World War, the economic depression of some 15 years ago, the recent years of war and, too, the great vogue for new synthetic fabrics, all proved extremely prejudicial to this enterprise. The Zurich silk industry has nevertheless partly regained its importance and with it, it is permissible to expect, the Conditioning House — an institution so essential to the industry — will continue its profitable activity. In the space of one hundred years, about 75 million kilos of silk have been conditioned by this House which also handles discharging operations, various standard tests (resistance, torsion, and so forth) and transport of the goods. Admitting that the loss of weight has averaged 0.7%, theoretically the weight of the goods handled has been diminished by 525,000 kilos, which at an average price of S. fr. 60.— per kilo means a saving of 31.5 million S. fr. for the buyers, at a cost of 7 million francs.

The space at our disposal obliges us to close this brief survey of the interesting centenary publication mentioned above, with its wealth of details, remarkable clarity and excellent presentation. We nevertheless hope to have occasion to refer again later to the activity of the Zurich Conditioning House.

CH.

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