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EMIGRATION OF SWISS INDUSTRIES.

By OSCAR WETZEL.

SILK INDUSTRY.

A) *Spinning and preparation of raw silk* — The emigration forced by circumstances has had the most devastating influence upon this industry in Switzerland. Actually there are only a few places in the Canton of Tessin where silk is still produced from the cocoon. The production of this article requires exceptionally cheap labour. It is generally done by women and children, and could evidently not be maintained in Switzerland against the overpowering competition of Italian establishments which produced very much cheaper owing to a labour legislation which was less advanced.

When, therefore, in 1898 an authorisation to employ in these factories children of secondary School age was withdrawn, the spinning of raw silk in Switzerland was really doomed. Owing to this measure, most of the Spinning establishments in the Canton of Tessin were immediately obliged to transfer their Works to Italy.

In 1913 we notice a definite case of a very important Spinning firm with connections in Switzerland, Italy and Germany which was forced to stop their mill in Switzerland while the foreign ones were running at full capacity.

This industry has therefore been, so to say, entirely stopped in Switzerland owing to cheap labour outside, especially in Italy, and further by the high tariffs of other countries.

In later years, this industry of raw silk emigrated from Switzerland as far as Brazil, after having covered a number of countries in Europe.

B) *Weaving of Silk Material.*

This industry was introduced into Switzerland by the Protestants emigrating from France and Italy. Up to the end of the 19th century the development in Switzerland showed an upward curve. After this period, however, we find it seriously handicapped by the development of similar industries in other countries. Again we find the cost of labour playing a great rôle, and Swiss works under the obligation either to lose their markets abroad or start factories in the respective countries.

Already in the 18th century, a Swiss by the name of Notz, as a result of an invitation from Emperor Joseph II in Vienna, opened a factory for silk material. To punish him for this unpatriotic action, he was banished from his country of birth by the Swiss Authorities.

In 1897, an Association of silk manufacturers in Zurich stated that the increasing emigration of their industry had become a veritable danger for Switzerland. The manufacturers at home could not find any capitalists to interest themselves in the investment of further money in the country. We see from this that a standstill in development had arrived, at about this period. At the same time, more factories were established abroad and after having satisfied the Home Market of their respective countries, started to compete with Swiss goods all over Europe.

At the same time we find a fact seen even to-day. The Works set up by Swiss outside their country had the advantage of being fitted with new machinery and were subject to all the latest experiences of the managers, whereas in Switzerland, owing to the depressed state of affairs, nobody was interested in spending more money on new machines and modernising the equipment. It is interesting to compare this with the actual conditions in Europe, and with Japan.

Already before, and during the War, factories in Russia, for instance, producing woollen, silk and cotton goods, were very considerably more up-to-date than similar factories in England. To-day, the same comparison can be made between Japan and England, or Switzerland. Even Italy to-day is running its textile industry on very much more up-to-date lines than either Switzerland or England.

In addition, there is the question of labour. You will find over and over again that workers, who have seen the output per machine or a number of machines run by one man or woman slowly increase, keep back the output. Only remember the trouble there was in the English textile industry when it was question of increasing the number of looms per weaver to about six.

It might interest you that already before the War, and during the first years of the War, I, myself, saw installations in Russia running anything between 10 and 20 automatic looms per person — and no grumbling about the work either; on the contrary the girls were quite pleased to be paid about half of what they would get in a Midland mill.

Coming back upon the question of the general situation in Switzerland, we find that owing to cheap labour not only in Austria and Italy, but also in Germany, France, etc., our industries were forced to emigrate. An additional reason was that qualified labour sometimes was not to be had — even in our country — because all the

factories were fully occupied. When, also, increased tariffs protected foreign markets, we can very well understand that a certain percentage of the Swiss silk weaving industry had either to "go to the wall," or abroad.

C) *Weaving of Technical Silk.*

The introduction of this industry into Switzerland under its actual form dates back to about 1830 when Dufour, the Industrialist from Lyons started the manufacture of this silk in St. Gall. This industry still exists to-day, as owing to its complicated way of production, hand-loom still have to be used. But this industry also had to start small factories abroad, one in Duisburg (Prussia), and one in Waldkirch, South Germany, but the greater part of the business is still done in Switzerland.

Whereas for a number of years, our country had more or less the monopoly for technical silk, there are to-day factories in Germany, France, Italy and even in Russia. But as consumers of this article, we must say that if we want a really first-class quality, the product must still to-day be made in Switzerland.

D) *Weaving of Silk Ribbons.*

This industry was brought to Basle by French refugees in the second half of the 16th century. Already in the 17th century a great number of home workers were utilised in the Basle territory, and in Southern Germany, adjoining Switzerland. This industry expanded later on to the adjoining cantons — Solothurn, Argovie and Bern. During the end of the 19th century part of the industry emigrated over the Swiss frontier into Alsace — to southern Germany and Austria. Again here we have the same symptoms as under silk material — that the pressure of circumstances from outside forced the Swiss Industrialists to do what was necessary in order to retain their markets abroad.

In 1804, the firm of De Barry & Bechoff, Silk Ribbon manufacturers of Basle, established a factory in Guebwiller. They took with them the necessary labour from Switzerland. 30 years later all these workers were returned to Switzerland after having been replaced by Alsaciens. Quite a number of other firms followed this example and by the time Germany annexed Alsace, we find quite a sprinkling of Swiss establishments along the other side of the Swiss frontier at St. Louis, Huminguen, Guebwiller, etc. Other firms had already penetrated to the interior of France and founded a number of daughter companies in Lyons.

In Germany we notice the same with Basle factories established in Lörrach, Grenzach, Säckingen and Niederhof. On the other side of Switzerland we have establishments in Bregenz (Austria). Later on this industry developed in Brazil, and it was found that the further these subsidiary companies got away from their Homeland, the more independent they became.

3) *EMBROIDERY.*

The exact origin of this Swiss industry cannot be fixed at any certain date, but we can say with certainty that in 1753, in St. Gall, a firm gave out embroidery work.

This industry was favoured in our country because the necessary raw materials were made nearby, and also by the presence of comparatively cheap labour. The number of workers looking for industrial occupations were very considerable, partially due to the introduction of mechanical spinning. In the 19th century, especially, this industry developed very well. Naturally, it experienced its ups and downs, but at the beginning of the World War, embroidered goods figured at the very head of our exports.

All foreign countries in competition were, up to that time, unable to stop the progress of the Swiss Embroidery industry which was led by a competent and creative body of experts.

In this industry, maybe more than in any other industry, qualified labour played a big rôle when there was question of emigration. St. Gall manufacturers were interested in establishments at Vorarlberg.

For many years there existed very close co-operation between this Austrian district and Switzerland, and it is only lately that this co-operation has suffered principally owing to Government arrangements on the part of Austria which first of all forbade imports of Swiss embroidery, and secondly tried to extend the industry established at Vorarlberg to the whole of Austria and Hungary.

(To be continued.)

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Weihnachten, Samstag, den 25. Dezember 1937.

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