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News in Brief (contd)

Sixty years ago the registered factories in Switzerland numbered 2642 with 135,000 employees. Today the figures reach 8386 and 410,000 respectively.

During 1939 some 2186 persons emigrated to foreign countries beyond Europe, an increase of 210 over 1938.

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BASLE AND THE SWISS SAMPLE FAIR.

The Exhibition in Zurich was still open, when plans were put forward for the Swiss Sample Fair in Basle. It will take place from the 30th March to the 9th April, 1940. Far from reducing the spring of its activity, the events of the last few months have, on the contrary, stimulated it. It is true that Basle has already known hours no less anxious than those we live in, and sometimes even tragic. The foundation of the town can be traced back to the Roman period, although nothing can be definitely ascertained as to the exact date. Excavations have made it possible to determine, however, that this colony was more an "emporium" than a strategic fortified place. The town has remained faithful to this economic tendency throughout the centuries.

Situated as it is in the crook formed by the Rhine before it flows northwards, Basle will always remain an important bridge town. Moreover, every advantage has always been drawn from this ideal position. Although the town passed successively under the domination of the Dukes of Burgundy and of the Counts of Habsbourg and formed part of Lotharingia or the German Empire, it always retained its essential characteristics, anxious above all to defend its privileges and its liberties and to strengthen its economic power. For a long time it was an episcopal see and drew great profit from this independent position, developing its commerce and trade. It was under the rule of a bishop that the first bridge was built over the Rhine in 1225.

It was under the same episcopal rule that Basle, in 1471, received Letters Patent from the Emperor authorising the town to hold an annual mercantile fair. In 1501 Basle joined the Swiss Confederation of which it was soon to become one of the chief centres of culture and commerce.

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