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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Ciba branches out into a new field of production.

The CIBA Company, at Basle, has just added a new branch to its manufacturing programme, which already comprises chemical and pharmaceutical products. The firm is now going to make therapeutic products for veterinary medicine. It was only after an exhaustive study of the question that this important Swiss company proceeded to extend its activities in this direction; it has already put on the market two veterinary specialities and two dietetic products for the improvement of nutritive value of fodder. Other products, which are at present in the course of being tested, will be placed on sale this year.

Ultra-modern chemical laboratories in Geneva.

It would be interesting to know how many people realise that whereas the natural essence of vanilla costs about 5,000 Swiss francs per kilo, the same quantity of synthetic essence can be had for 25 francs per kilo, i.e. it costs 200 times less. This little comparison clearly illustrates the interest that exists in regard to the manufacture of synthetic essences and flavours. One of the principal factories in this branch, in the world, the firm of Firmaenich & Co. of Geneva, inaugurated, last autumn, some new research laboratories which have not got their equal either in Europe, or even in America. To put things briefly, it may be said that the work which takes place there serves, on the one hand, for the analysis of natural flavours so as to recognise their constitution in order to be able to produce them synthetically, and, on the other hand, for the realisation by means of synthesis of entirely new products. The new Firmaenich laboratories, which are equipped in the most modern way, contain 6,250 yards of electric cables and more than 23.6 miles of conduits for the conveyance of water, steam, compressed air, exhaust, nitrogen, etc.

Geneva industry's contribution to automation.

The incredible progress achieved in the field of automation has produced some very difficult problems, particularly in regard to control operating at a distance. A firm in Geneva, which specialises in the manufacture of articles of precision, is now producing for this purpose membranous solenoidal valves, possessing two, three, or four channels, which are controlled electro-magnetically. These valves, which can be used for all the usual liquids and gases, within a large scale of pressures and temperatures, and which do not comprise any slide, press, joint, lever, or other part subject to attrition, can attain very high frequencies in their functioning and last for a very long time. They are not affected by impurities or vibrations, and are absolutely assured against any risk of leakage.

Television in Switzerland.

At the end of February, 1960, the number of TV subscribers in Switzerland totalled 89,682, 83,474 being private and 6,208 collective subscribers (i.e. restaurants, hospitals, sanatoria, homes, etc.).

A Swiss expert consulted by Iran.

Mr. A. Stucky, the Head of the Polytechnical School of the Lausanne University has been called to

Iran, where he will give expert advice on the building of dams on particularly difficult ground. He will also give a lecture at the University in Teheran.

A new International Institute in Geneva.

An International Institute for Social Studies is to be established in Geneva (Switzerland), under the aegis of the International Labour Office, which will strive to promote the applied and scientific study of labour problems.

Swiss Watchmakers Information Centre in Middle East.

In order to facilitate the distribution of watchmaking products on the markets of the Middle East, the leading lights in the Swiss watchmaking industry have just established a Watchmakers of Switzerland Information Centre at Beirut (Lebanon), the task of which will be to keep the producers informed as to the state and the requirements of the markets, to enlighten the customers by means of carefully prepared propaganda, and to collaborate with the distributors by means of technical assistance. This Information Centre is being managed by the Head of the Agency for the Middle East attached to the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade.

Swiss machinery for Nigeria.

An important order has been received by the firm of Brown Boveri, of Baden, from the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria. This order is in respect of two units of single-axle gas turbines, of 10,000 kilowatts each, with an open circuit, operating without any cooling water, by means of natural gas or, if necessary, light oil. These units are to be set up at Afam, forty kilometres north of Port Harcourt, and put into operation in the spring of 1962. This order, including the accessory apparatus, amounts to 971,000 pounds sterling or 11 million 754 thousand Swiss francs.

A Swiss Centre in Australia.

A group of the branch establishments and agencies of Swiss firms, in Sydney (Australia) formed a syndicate, a short time ago, which intends to set up a Swiss Centre, either by building or else acquiring suitable premises in the central part of the town. Preliminary conversations are now taking place, and are already quite advanced and several important firms are showing a great interest in this project.

The first electronic mill in Switzerland.

Last autumn, the first mill in Switzerland to be operated by an electronic brain, was put into service at Coppet, a small town in the Canton of Vaud, not far from Geneva. This mill specialises in the manufacture of foodstuffs for cattle-breeding and for poultry-breeding. The preparation of these foods has now become a veritable science, requiring the setting up of all kinds of ultra-modern equipment. The mixing of substances possessing different densities is very difficult, whilst the business of incorporating in a homogeneous fashion 20 grammes of vitamin into a ton of foodstuff, is quite an art. This new mill which has been inaugurated at Coppet comes up to all the modern requirements. An electronic brain, which is regulated in a most meticulous manner, makes it

possible to run the entire plant from one sole control panel. The mixtures can be combined with the help of a keyboard, and the operator is generally replaced by perforated strips. The electronic brain controls everything. All error or forgetfulness are excluded, for should this or that raw material required for the mixture be missing, an alarm is given automatically and the machines stop. We would like to add that the entire plant has been manufactured in Switzerland, the milling machinery being made by the firm of Bühler Brothers, at Uzwil, and the control panel by the firm of Bührle & Co., at Oerlikon.

Wood technology at the Federal Institute.

The Council of the Federal Polytechnical School in Zurich has decided to introduce a cycle of special studies for wood technology, as from the Summer Term of 1960. These studies are intended for graduates of the School who would like to specialise in this branch; these courses will also be open to listeners. Suggested by the Swiss Union for the Promotion of Timber, this cycle of course meets a need in the industry. It will make it possible to train specialists in the technology of wood, and engineers for working it, who will thus be fitted to undertake interesting jobs both in Switzerland and abroad.

An international award.

The City of Geneva has instituted two annual prizes, of 5,000 Swiss francs each, for the purpose of

rewarding the artists or craftsmen presenting the best watch or jewellery creations. The prizes are awarded for work executed in accordance with drawings sent in by competitors and selected by the Jury. The prize-winning articles, which are to be honoured with the title "City of Geneva Watch and Jewellery Prize", are to be exhibited every year at the exhibition "Watches and Jewellery", which will take place this year from 9th September to 2nd October, in Geneva.

The Congress of congress organizers in Lausanne.

The 2nd Congress of the Organizers and Technicians of International Congresses, placed under the patronage of Mr. Max Petitpierre, the President of the Swiss Confederation, was held in Lausanne in the middle of March. This important meeting, at which were discussed questions of organization and technique, was held at the Palais de Beaulieu and was attended by 250 delegates representing all the big national and international organizations and associations.

SWISS INDUSTRY FORGES AHEAD

As in all industrial countries, the production of capital goods has made much greater progress in Switzerland in the course of the last fifty years or so than the production of consumer goods.

In the year 1911 there were in the Swiss machinery and apparatus industry — for the sake of

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simplicity we pick out only this group as representing the "technical industries" — 46,580 office staff and factory hands employed. In the year 1950 this figure had become 113,795 and, only eight years later, was already 168,935. The share of the industries mentioned in the total number of persons employed in establishments controlled by the Factory Act rose from 14.2% in the year 1911 to 23.1% in 1950 and still further to 27.1% in the year 1958. The technical industries, by which are meant the machinery, instrument and apparatus manufacturing industries, have become one of the main buttresses of the Swiss economy and of foreign trade which is so important for that economy. That is proved — because the depreciation in the value of money does not allow an immediate comparison — perhaps less by contrasting the export values of 105 million francs in the year 1913 with the 2,097 million francs in the year 1958, as rather by the constantly increasing share of the machines, instruments and apparatus in the total national exports which rose from 7.7% in the year 1913 to 20% in the year 1938, 26.4% in the year 1948 and 31.5% in the year 1958.

The outstanding importance of industrial productivity becomes more and more marked at the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle, the annual display of the output capacity of Swiss industries, by the fact that nowadays a good half of the total exhibition area amounting to some 1,400,000 sq. ft. is occupied by the industrial groups. In fact, these would really have to have much more exhibition space for themselves if there were not an agreement between the machine-tool and the textile machinery industries by which these two groups take it in turn at Basle to exhibit each second year, thereby enabling each of them to present a much more representative display when the time comes.

1960 is the year when the *machine-tool industry* will take part and which alone will occupy two large halls and one smaller one with something like 107,640 sq. ft. of exhibition space. As a second large export group in the industrial sphere, the *electrical industry* will present a display of equally great importance. A whole series of larger and smaller groups will be assembled round these two main industries. The extent of the display offered by them is revealed by the following list of headings: building machines, packaging machines, machines for the foodstuffs industries, for the hotel industry and large institutions, for laundries and ironing shops, office machines, industrial requisites, tools, measuring instruments, the welding industry, workshop furniture and fittings, ventilation and air-conditioning plant, apparatuses for the chemical industry, medicinal and dental equipment, the aluminium and non-ferrous semi-finished products industry, together with the transport equipment industry with a wide range of rail and road vehicles and mechanical handling plant of all kinds.

Thus the Basle Fair from 23rd April to 3rd May 1960 offers an excellent general survey of a large number of branches of industry. Precision and adaptation to the special needs of customers are just as much the guiding star in all these branches of Swiss production as in the *watchmaking industry* which, as an industry of a special kind, has long possessed a world-wide reputation and is also represented in Basle by a unique display.