

Jubilation at the Dunfermline silk mills

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MRS. ROSE ZIEREISEN †

We are very sorry to announce the death of Mrs. Rose Ziereisen who passed away suddenly on 26th September, only a few days after returning from a holiday in Switzerland.

Mrs. Ziereisen, *née* Raccoursier, was born in 1897, at Corcelles-le-Jorat, in the Canton of Vaud which was also her Canton of origin, living later at Yverdon. Her early bent was for pewter, metal and leather work in which she had acquired expert knowledge. She left Switzerland in the 'thirties to go to Holland as governess-teacher in high-class families and then came to England in 1937. Soon, however, the war put an end to comparable occupations here, and she took a business appointment at a time when firms' staffs were being depleted.

In 1950, she married Mr. Walter Ziereisen, but already before and indeed since then she shared with him, in selfless devotion, the work of running the hostel side of the Swiss Benevolent Society premises at 31 Conway Street, W.1. There, countless Swiss girls in difficulties found not only a refuge and a home, but also understanding and care. Most probably little will ever be known of the extent of this welfare activity, carried out in silent modesty and with success well before the appointment of a Welfare Secretary and the creation of the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in 1950, with office at the same address. The residential care of emergency cases admitted to 31 Conway Street, in addition to that of other tenants, remained, however, entrusted to Mr. and Mrs. Ziereisen until the opening of the Swiss Hostel for Girls in 1957.

In 1959, Mr. and Mrs. Ziereisen moved out of London to Coulsdon, but Mrs. Ziereisen continued from there her other good work for the Swiss Benevolent Society, i.e. that of the clothing section and of the Christmas Parcels, undaunted by the long and frequent journeys to town, which this entailed. She had this work very much at heart.

For many years, Mrs. Ziereisen also helped with the assembling of Swiss children leaving by train or by air for a summer holiday in Switzerland under the auspices of "Pro Juventute" and meeting them on their return to ensure the linking-up with parents.

The funeral took place at Croydon Crematorium on 30th September. Pasteur A. Nicod officiated.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to her husband and to her relatives in Switzerland.

J.Z.

PERSONAL

We have great pleasure in announcing the birth of a daughter Julie Suzanne to Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Simon of "Nomis", 12 Pool End Close, Tytherington, Macclesfield, Cheshire. Mr. Simon is a very active member of the Manchester Swiss Club, a former President, and we wish the baby and her happy parents the very best for the future.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

The "Swiss Observer" is published every second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 28th October. We shall be glad to receive all articles and reports not later than **Tuesday, 18th October**. Short news items only can be accepted later.

JUBILATION AT THE DUNFERMLINE SILK MILLS

The silk weaving firm Gessner & Co. A.G., at Waedenswil, is celebrating its 125th anniversary this summer. One of their subsidiary companies is the Dunfermline Silk Mills, Ltd., in Scotland. Its Chairman is Mr. M. E. Isler whose late father was instrumental in bringing the silk industry to Scotland in 1925. Another Director of the Mills is Mr. B. Frick, the Swiss Consular Agent for Scotland and an active member of the Dunfermline Swiss Club.

For the jubilee, the firm in Switzerland published the history of the undertaking, an interesting book, attractively illustrated. From it we learn how the founder Hans Konrad Gessner, son of a clergyman, preferred silk to his father's wine growing village of Stammheim. During a turbulent period, young Gessner did an apprenticeship in a trading company and later married the daughter of his employer. In 1830, he moved to Zurich to open his own silk agency. One of his two sons followed in his footsteps and settled at Waedenswil in 1841, as partner in the silk firm of Theiler and Steiner, which then became that of Steiner, Gessner & Co.

The next chapter describes the story of the development of the silk industry in Switzerland, especially of the Waedenswil pioneers. It was they who first bred silk worms. It makes fascinating reading, also the following chapter in which we learn of the growth and expansion of the company which, in August 1849, was taken over completely by August Gessner who had married a Theiler daughter.

The silk firm's reputation grew; their merchandise was sought after, and in 1850, was awarded an honourable mention at the industrial exhibition in London. The firm went on developing, and August's only son joined his father. The factories were enlarged and social welfare institutions founded for the benefit of the workers. August Gessner was one of the founders and the first Chairman of the "Leihkasse Waedenswil".

By the end of the century, silk-weaving had become a mechanical process, and the advent of electricity was of great help in the new development. The family business became a limited company, and the first subsidiary firms overseas were opened.

The 'thirties brought their own troubles, and at one stage, shareholders had to sacrifice large amounts to save the company. A few years later, the undertaking flourished again, though the war brought its problems, too. But the foundation was a sound one, and once again the business survived under Max Isler-Vetter who is still at the helm. Rationalisation and automation have played their part in the more recent expansion, and now, on completion of 125 years, the Gessner *Seidenstoffwebereien* look forward to a future as successful as the past. MM

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