

Swiss Trade exhibition, Basle

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SWISS TRADE EXHIBITION, BASLE.

AUSLANDSCHWEIZER-TAG.

The 5th Basle Fair (Schweizer Mustermesse) was opened on April 16th in the presence of a large and representative gathering of home and foreign journalists. In his inaugural speech the president—Dr. F. Aemmer—pointed out that owing to the many adverse factors no very great anticipations could be entertained. However, the space had been enlarged and accommodated about 1,100 standholders; the number of buyer-cards issued, especially to foreign visitors, showed a noteworthy increase. He referred in gratifying terms to the liberal financial support which the enterprise had, from its inception, received by the Federal and local authorities, the canton Basel-Stadt having contributed Frs. 1,106,000 to the expenses of the four previous exhibitions.

It is not the intention to give here a survey of the different exhibits; the products of practically all our industries were displayed to great advantage (a notable exception being the boot-trade). A scrutinizing eye could not help being struck by the conscientious execution and high workmanship of the specimens on show. The organizing committee had taken great pains to attract buyers from foreign countries, special multiplicate sub-committees having assisted their buyers and afforded them all possible encouragement created for Belgium, France, Germany, etc., so as to ment and information. Strange to say, no such organization existed in order to stimulate trips by business men from England.

Monday, April 18th, was the day fixed for celebrating the presence of Swiss from abroad. The large hall at the Café Spitz was packed to suffocation when at 4.30 p.m. the official part opened with a conference on "Consular Reform and Emigration" by Dr. C. Benzinger. The very interesting arguments and suggestions propounded by the speaker were listened to attentively, and although we all felt—rightly or wrongly—that after the experiences of the last few years some reform in our Consular system was imperative, the subject was not referred to nor entered into during the subsequent discussion; the matter seems to be of too complex and technical a nature to be examined on such occasions. What appealed more to the heart of the audience was the second lecture on "Les devoirs de la Suisse envers ses Colonies." The eloquence and warmth, enlivened by an occasional witticism, with which Mr. de Traz expounded his theme rivetted everyone's attention, and it seems a thousand pities that there was no time and little disposition to debate and explore this new orientation. We might have been able to take away with us a programme, a line of action, which would have given the Auslandschweizertag the necessary backbone and *raison-d'être*. As it happened, no sooner was the discussion opened than an endless string of war legacies began to unroll. Many and multifold are the unfulfilled pledges, and determined and insistent must be the demand for satisfaction. A very strong contingent of compatriots had come from Germany and Alsace-Lorraine; they had suffered intensely and still suffered and made a vigorous and pathetic plea for reparation, the restoration of private property (which under the Hague Articles is supposed to be inviolable), compensation for wrongful detention and moral damage. The ordinary official channels having proved unavailing, they fervently appealed to the chairman to use his influence with the Federal authorities. Other questions raised were the remission of the military tax to war-sufferers, reduction of railway fares to children, holidays for Swiss children from

abroad, uniform international visés, the harassing restrictions of employment in neighbouring countries, etc., etc. The dinner-hour having long been transgressed and the avalanche of queries not subsiding, the chairman requested that any further motions be sent to him in writing, when he would submit them to the proper quarters and do his utmost to obtain redress. He closed the session, expressing the hope that the lively interest taken in the proceedings would lead to some tangible result. The company adjourned to the adjoining hall, where about 120 sat down to an opportune dinner and an excellent musical entertainment. Jodlers, glee-quartets and drummers soon roused the dormant spirits of the globe-trotters, and when later on we quitted the lesser Basle, marching to the accompaniment of a drum and fife band through the quaint narrow streets of the old town to the "Brauner Mutz," the culminating point of our home-yearning had been reached and consummated. We settled down to that cheerful and unconcerned "aise" for which the small hours of the morning seem to be particularly adapted.

We cannot but reiterate here our appreciation of the admirable and appropriate arrangements made for the entertainment of the large party; our thanks are in the first instance due to the untiring efforts of one who proved himself the moving spirit of the party, but whose modesty forbade any mention of his name; his portrait, however (sketched in the small hours) we wish to immortalize in this article.



If, in conclusion, we say that the Auslandschweizertag has left with us a certain sense of disappointment, this is but to admit that we went there with our hopes too highly pitched. But it seems to us that these gatherings afford a unique opportunity for creating a bridge between the mother-country and the 350,000 Swiss residing abroad. The existence of a certain lack of sympathy and comprehension cannot be disputed and the patriotism has been cooled down of many a Swiss who voluntarily left his adopted home and position in the memorable days of August, 1914, ready to make the supreme sacrifice. There is an immense field here for an intelligent propaganda and useful activity; if the Auslandschweizertag is to mean anything it must pursue a definite course, and we trust that, difficult as the task may seem, the promoters will work out a programme of action along such lines as will ensure that a constructive policy will be developed in future.

ENGLISHMAN desires to exchange English for high German with German-Swiss gentleman. Write, Curran, 141, Ledbury Rd., W.2.