

Bienne

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BIENNE.

Bienne, the 9th biggest town in Switzerland from the point of view of population, today numbers some 53,000 inhabitants, as opposed to less than 5,000 a century ago. It is well situated from the geographic point of view, where the Swiss plain and the Jura meet, and has become one of the principal railway junctions in our country. The Basle-Geneva, Belfort-Berne-Brigue and Zurich-Lausanne-Geneva lines all pass through our station as well as lines of lesser importance. The busy highway that runs along the foot of the Jura is cut at Bienne by another coming from Belfort and Basle through the valleys of the Jura and continuing in the direction of Berne and the Oberland.

The watchmaking industry, which was introduced into our town in the middle of the last century, fell in fruitful soil and developed rapidly, to such an extent in fact that it has now become the prevailing industry. About half the population is employed, in one way or another, in the manufacture of watches, for which Bienne is famous all over the world. 95% of the watches manufactured in our town are exported. There is hardly a single country in the world that cannot be numbered among the clients of the manufacturers of Bienne. Watchmaking is a fine, healthy and clean industry requiring a high degree of skill, precision and dexterity on the part of those employed in it. These qualities are widespread throughout the district owing to the fact that the profession of watchmaker is very often handed down from father to son.

The authorities of Bienne however have always made a point of encouraging the establishment or development of other industries because watchmaking is very susceptible to any fluctuations in the economic market and has for a long time been subject to more or less regular crises.

The metallurgical industry is found in various forms. There are, for example, a big motor car assembly works, factories making bicycles and spare parts, numerous factories turning out precision machinery, a wire-works employing nearly 1,000 workers and office staff, a piano factory, a radio factory, etc.

The town of Bienne is essentially industrial and commercial. It is situated on the borderline between the French and German-speaking parts of the country and both German and French are spoken there, the latter by about one third of the population. The two ethnical groups show great mutual understanding and live in perfect harmony. There are schools for both language groups at all stages of education, and discussions in the administrative councils are carried on in the speaker's mother tongue. It is generally considered that this co-habitation of the two languages and the two mentalities is a fruitful one, in that the inhabitant of Bienne often combines the tenacity, endurance and industry of the German Swiss with the qualities of ingenuity, improvisation and charm of the citizen of the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

The town of Bienne, with its specialised industries, almost all in the field of precision work, attracts skilled labour, which it trains still further in its excellent technical schools. The present state of prosperity of the town is to a great extent due to the recognised good workmanship of its products. Unemployment

has been practically non-existent during the last few years. In spite of certain setbacks, such as, for example, the increase in American customs' tariffs on watches, our town continues to look towards the future with faith and confidence.

Edouard Baumgartner.

Mayor of the town of Bienne.

(*Swiss Industry & Trade.*)

CARL SPITTELER.

par Gottfried Bohnenblust.

Carl Spitteler a vu le jour le 24 avril 1845, à Liestal. Le père du poète, né à Bâle en 1809, exerça, jeune encore, des fonctions importantes, fut député à la Diète qui vota la dissolution du Sonderbund, pour être ensuite pendant sept ans le trésorier de la nouvelle Confédération. Puis il se retira à Liestal et y présida le Tribunal cantonal.

La mère de l'écrivain, Anne-Dorothee Brodbeck, avait, quand il naquit, à peine dix-huit ans. Son mari en comptait déjà trente-six. Dans le cas de notre poète, comme en beaucoup d'autres, demeurés célèbres, c'est l'héritage maternel — l'imagination et le cœur — qui domine longtemps. Mais à son tour, la volonté qu'il tient de son père se manifeste, tournée en lui vers la poésie, et non plus vers les réalités tangibles. Après la mort de sa mère, qui vécut à son foyer jusqu'à plus de quatre-vingts ans, il rédige ses "Premiers souvenirs".

Spitteler a passé huit ans en Russie, de 1871 à 1879, d'abord chez le général Standerskjöld, puis chez M. de Cramer, à Saint-Petersbourg. Pendant cette période, il eut l'occasion de voyager beaucoup, surtout dans le nord et le centre de l'Europe. Ce ne fut pas l'exil. Chez les Cramer, en particulier, on connaissait "une vie merveilleuse, le bonheur, la beauté, la distinction, l'amitié". Dès lors Spitteler est un grand Suisse de l'étranger, et il l'est demeuré jusqu'à la fin par sa langue et son aisance mondaine.

De retour au pays, il va, pendant douze ans, mener une vie ardue, passant d'une école à une salle de rédaction, de La Neuveville à Bâle, et de Bâle à Zurich, enseignant la grammaire allemande, le grec, le latin, expliquant Ovide et d'autres poètes de l'antiquité, rendant compte à la "Grenzpost", et à la "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" de la vie littéraire, artistique et politique d'alors. Il s'en acquitte avec soin, car il eut toujours la passion de l'ouvrage bien fait. Mais il souffre de ne pouvoir achever l'oeuvre

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