

would be unsuitable for this old-fashioned country, but it is believed that much of the apathy and slackness of the shipyard workers is due to ignorance of the vital issues at stake. As has been said before, this could, and should have been made clear to them by suitable propaganda.

The Morning Post

### DYESTUFFS AND THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

NOTHING could be more convincing of the neglect of this country to provide the means whereby the applications of scientific discovery should be made available in the conduct of important industries than the speech of Mr. Lennox B. Lee on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Calico Printers' Association, of which he is chairman, on September 18. It appears that the association is by far the largest user of color in this country. Before the advent of the war the 2000 colors it then used were to the extent of 70 per cent produced solely in Germany, and of the remainder only 7 per cent were of British origin. At the present time out of the restricted list of 230 essential base colors only 25 per cent are produced by British makers, one third of these being substitutes, and only used because better colors cannot be obtained, while the cost is not less than from 200 to 1000 per cent above pre-war prices. Moreover, of the 230 colors above-named, only the commoner colors, including also one or two of the better kind, are obtained from British firms. The association is, in fact, dependent upon the Swiss color manufacturers for the finer ranges and specialties, while quite half the colors of the said list cannot be obtained at all, among them some of the most valuable.

This is a very serious state of affairs, since of the cotton goods export of

Great Britain, amounting in 1913 to 56,000,000L., more than half were exported in the colored state. Unless in the future the colors essential to the industry can be produced in this country of a quality and range and at a price which compare favorably with the production of Germany and Switzerland, this great industry must inevitably suffer, and be doomed to ultimate failure; and not alone this important moiety of our cotton textile exports, for we shall likewise imperil the market for uncolored textiles also. A boycott which is contemplated on the import of German dyes, with the view of encouraging the production of British dyes, will not meet the case so long as the quality or the class of dye (new dyes are continually being produced), or the price at which they can be sold to the user, will not compare with the product of the foreign manufacturer. The calico printers and dyers, having regard to the fact that they are in competition with nations all over the world in foreign markets, must of necessity get the colors they require in the best and cheapest market, and if they cannot procure these at home must do so where they can. We have the raw material of the coal-tar colors here in vast quantities, which we largely exported to Germany, and in the case of one large firm in the north of England, which is Swiss-owned, the intermediate products are sent to Switzerland, to be there treated and returned to this country in the form of dyes of fine quality.

There is but one effective remedy for this most serious menace to one of the greatest of our industries, and it consists in the provision of a numerous highly trained body of skilled workers which it is the business of our scientific colleges to supply. Therein lies the initial advantage of Germany and Switzerland. Just fifty-six years ago it was confidently stated in an official docu-

ment that, having regard to the exhibits at the International Exhibition, London, in 1862, 'England has now become the dye-producing nation of Europe,' and we now see, because of our lack of enterprise and vision, how completely this has been falsified. Mr. Milton Clarke, the president of the Bradford Dyers' Association, declared in February, 1916, that the establishment of the synthetic dye industry was vital to our national safety, since dyes and high explosives were very closely related, and that complete, self-contained, and independent manufacture of aniline dyes within the United Kingdom was essential to the commercial and martial protection of the State. 'Had it not been for the aid we have received from the Swiss makers,' he

went on to say, 'I dare not contemplate what our position would have been during the last eighteen months.'

The vital importance of this question is evidenced by the fact that, taking the whole range of the textile industries of the kingdom, the annual exports reach a total value of 200,000,000*l.*, and the number of persons employed is something near 2,000,000. It is, therefore a matter of serious national concern, and justifies the Government in any prudently considered action which would legitimately and permanently insure the well-being not only of the dye-producers, but also of the dye-consumers. Wisely conceived, their interests are mutual and inseparable, and must be studied as a whole.

Nature

## THE TALK OF EUROPE

### LIMEHOUSE NIGHTS

INTERVIEWED about the books people are now reading, a West End bookseller said that Mr. Thomas Burke's book of *Limehouse Nights* still excites the interest of his customers — and as volumes of short stories go the customers certainly get value for money in Mr. Burke's book; but the bookseller went on to explain that his customers buy the book because they want to know something of the unexplored end of London where the docks are. 'A poor reason,' says the *Saturday Review*, 'though certainly the title of the book, if an excellent "selling" title, is misleading. Mr. Burke tells rare and strange stories, but those lurid and barbarous nights of his never follow the days in Limehouse. His picturesque

yarns might fit remote Callao or Canton or any by-way which we do not know. But his "peculiar Limehouse, with the strangeness of its lurking revolt, and with its unexpected Orientals in a sly, pungent, and exotic fantasy, is a dream; a curious and compelling dream; but it is to the real Limehouse what a fiery dragon is to a well-ordered cow. The cow has horns, it is true. It might if it liked. But cows never do. They hardly ever think of it.'

### THE SPARTACUS GROUP

Writing from Berlin, a correspondent of the *Morning Post* sends definite information concerning the obscure Spartacus group.

'The Social Democrats are moving