

Artificial Wool Production in Italy

THE manufacture of artificial wool from milk has been successfully started in Italy, and the product known as Lanital has been shown to possess properties suitable for the textile industry. Ninety-four tons of Lanital were produced in 1936 and 760 tons in the first seven months of 1937. The process is based on a patent taken out in 1935 by Comm. Antonio Ferretti, and the plant as installed at the factory of Snia Viscosa at Milan is described in an illustrated article in *Engineering* of December 17. In the process, milk is first deprived of most of its cream, and then chemically treated to coagulate the casein. From vats the casein is transferred to tanks in which are placed water and certain solvents, the result being a viscous substance which can be made into fibres by squirting through fine holes in a spinning nozzle. After passing through an alkaline bath, the fibres in bundles are cut into 'flocks' which after further treatment are dried in steam-heated drying machines, the material then being ready for spinning and weaving into fabrics. It is stated that 'Lanital' has higher heat retaining properties than natural wool and that it can be boiled without loss of weight. Though established to render Italy free from the necessity of relying on outside supplies of raw material, purchases of casein are already being made from Holland and Denmark. It is, however, estimated that the country can supply 20-25 per cent of its wool requirements. At a recently opened exhibition in Rome, a whole pavilion is devoted to the Lanital industry.

Scandinavian Influence in Northumbrian Art

SCANDINAVIAN influence, owing to the Norse occupation, left a deep-seated and long-persistent mark on the life and culture of northern England, which is especially to be noted in art motifs and decorative design at the close of the first and beginning of the second millennia of our era. An interesting and instructive example of this influence is to be seen in the crozier of Bishop Ranulf Flambard, who died in 1128, and whose tomb on the site of the Chapter House of Durham Cathedral was opened in 1878. With his body were found the remains of a pewter chalice, his sapphire ring and his pastoral staff. The ring and staff were exhibited by Mr. T. D. Kendrick at the Society of Antiquaries on December 16. The wood of the staff has perished, but there remains the crook and ferrule of iron. The crook was silver-plated, and had been cleverly and delicately chased with an interlace of slender serpents, the design being inlaid in niello. As Mr. Kendrick pointed out, Flambard had so far identified himself with northern England as to adopt for his crozier the hard and economical ecclesiastical art of Northumbria in preference to the richer style of southern England. Mr. Kendrick went on to show that this ornament was in the characteristic eleventh century Viking style, and must have been made by a smith well practised in making the silver-plated spearheads with niello design of serpents and scrolls, which come chiefly from the Baltic lands. Some of such spearheads had been found in England, and there was

little doubt that Flambard's staff had been made by a Northumberland smith. Though the design was Scandinavian in style and feeling, in detail it showed certain marked peculiarities, which must be regarded as northern English, since they could be explained only as due to a long-established English manuscript style. They were not found in purely Scandinavian art. There was additional evidence for this Anglo-Scandinavian style, as for example in architectural detail at Kirkburn in Yorkshire, which helped to prove its general diffusion.

Health Legislation in Industry

DR. LEONARD P. LOCKHART opened a discussion on the "Wider Issues of Health Legislation in Industry" in the Section of Medical Sociology at the recent annual meeting of the British Medical Association held at Belfast (*Brit. Med. J.*, September 25, 1937). He said that the new Factories Act, in spite of omissions and shortcomings, represents a very considerable advance in social legislation. While certain provisions will act automatically to improve health and safety, there are others that will depend on a high level of co-operation and of common consent to make the result effective. He pointed out the important part played by voluntary effort preceding the consolidation by law. For example, individual employers have done a considerable amount of experimental work in industrial health, and much of what is known as industrial welfare has proved so valuable that it has now ceased to be voluntary and is to become an obligation. The voluntary activity of progressive employers, aided by the trade unions, has provided the necessary data to form a basis of the new industrial law.

THE Act as it is pegs industrial health and welfare at a higher level than ever before, but it should not be assumed that nothing remains to be done. The long fight to obtain recognition of society's duty to its members is all but won; the next task will be more laborious, and it will lack the spectacular victories of the earlier political struggles. Nor must it be thought that the responsibilities of the employer are ended when he has fulfilled the letter of the law. Many of the wider issues of industrial health, such as the psychoneuroses and emotional disturbance, with their physical sequelæ, arise not out of unhealthy conditions as commonly understood; but out of methods of work, methods of selection of staff, systems of supervision, payment and incentives, and Dr. Lockhart suggests that some form of statutory advisory board might be desirable, since it would be free to raise and discuss these matters before they became political questions. He also advocates an industrial training for doctors as a post-graduate course. The paper raises many important issues, and is worthy of very careful consideration.

Control of Public Lighting

ON December 10, Mr. J. M. Kennedy, Electricity Commissioner, inaugurated the 'Actadis' system for the ripple control of the public lighting of Maidstone. This is the latest development of a method which