

1952 Louna

Suomen Pankin Johtokunnalle .

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Allekirjoittaneelle tarjoutui kuluneen syyskauden aikana ainutlaatuinen tilaisuus tutustua kolmen kuukauden aikana Englantiin, sen kieleen, kansaan, opiskelu- ja pankkioloihin. Suomen Pankin Johtokunta osoitti jälleen tunnettua ja tunnustettua suopeuttaan alaisiaan kohtaan myöntämällä minulle tätä tarkoitusta varten stipendin, mistä täten pyydän saada esittää vilpittömän ja syvästi tuntemani kiitoksen.

Ryhtyessäni seuraavassa esittämään eräitä havaintoja ja vaikutelmia tältä matkaltani haluan aluksi selvitykseksi lausua muutaman sanan:

Olen laatinut matkakertomukseni englanninkielellä ensiksikin siitä syystä, että matkani päätarkoituksena olivat nimenomaan kieliopinnot, ja toiseksi siitä syystä, että ajatus aivan kuin itsestään kääntyy englanninkielelle muistelllessani oleskeluani Lontoossa ja sikäläistä elämää. Matkasuunnitelmani mukaisesti opiskelin Lontoossa kolme kuukautta elokuun 15 päivästä marraskuun 15 päivään. Kieliopintoni tapahtuivat Pitman's Collegenisessä tunnetussa lontoolaisessa kaupallisessa kieliopistossa, jossa suorittamissani tutkinnoissa sain kolme eri diplomia kiitettävien arvolausein. Varsinaisten kieliopintojen ohella seurasin työskentelyä eräissä Lontoon suurpankeissa. Kaikista näistä kokemuksista kerron seuraavassa hieman laajemmin.

As I mentioned, my studies were centralized to Pitman's College, School for Foreign Students, where I took a ten weeks' course, 3 hours daily. The first lesson every day was English language consisting of dictation, grammar, expressions and idioms. The second lesson was Commercial Correspondence and the third one, the most interesting, was held by the headmaster himself and called "Life and Institutions in England". It gave the best possible view of everything essentially British from their constitutional and parliamentary system to their dominions, from their education to their peculiar customs, from their literature to their music. Once a week one hour was dedicated to discussions and the students were not sparing of their questions or criticisms. As to the latter they were by the teachers considered in most tolerant way but I had the feeling that we were indulgently smiled at: "Oh you stupid aliens, can't you see that our traditions have survived generations and centuries; they have stood through wars, through all kinds of changes in the external world but we are prepared to suffer whatever may come to our way rather than abolish anything we have inherited! Why would we be influenced by your criticisms!" - This is a general English attitude and very respectable indeed. Probably it is the clue to their power.

Before I figuratively shut the doors of Pitmans' as I have done literally already weeks ago, I should like to mention some words about their examinations. They have examinations once a month both in English language (Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced stages) and Commercial Correspondence. I passed my

examination in Intermediate English in September and in Advanced English and Commercial Correspondence just before leaving London.- In Commercial Correspondence examination we had to write eight business letters out of nine given subjects. In the language test they laid particular stress on composition. We had to write an essay of about two pages on some given topics. This time these were: "The Future of Aviation"; "Disarmament"; "Fascism". Rather masculine themes, weren't they? I wonder whether the examiners agreed with my opinions about "Fascism".- Among the other questions there was a letter on a given subject; correcting of some sentences and the rest exclusively grammatical.

As a whole I was very satisfied with the course. The tuition could have been a little more personal but as the classes were rather big, about 15-20 students, the result could not be but a kind of "mass-teaching".- It was most interesting to follow the opinions of my college-mates. They were of numerous nationalities: quite a lot from the British dominions; apart from them whole colonies of Swiss and French people, Italians, Greeks, Germans, Scandinavians and Japans. There were at the same time not less than five Finns, but fortunately not in the same classes. By the way, we had to speak only English in the college.

My banking experience in London was mainly concentrated to the Hambros Bank Limited, where I was every afternoon for one month. I stayed there in the Swedish and English, Credit, Foreign, Payment and Cash Departments. The longest time I spent in the Credit Department, mainly for the very simple and obvious reason

that they could give at my disposal one vacant writing-table and that they were not, for the moment, as busy as the other departments seemed to be. Especially the English Department was overloaded with work and the officials had to work overtime at least twice a week. Nevertheless I had the impression that the efficiency was not the best possible and that some new-organization could have improved the situation.

For instance all envelopes were typed by the ordinary typists together with the letters (of course this is only half-a-minute's job per every letter but already per twenty letters it means the considerable time of ten minutes and I can assure you that every correspondent writes more than twenty letters daily). Another drawback was the fact that every day half an hour before the end of the bank time - just when the daily haste was at its worst - two girls from every department dealing with the post had to go to the mail-room in order to put the letters and enclosures to the right envelopes and to take care of their delivery. Our posting system seems to me to be a much more elastic one.

The Finnish timber credit was dealt with in the Swedish Department; in the Credit Department again I saw the big organization of for instance the Austrian wool and fur credits.

To Credit Department were concentrated the guarantees, too. I found there some guarantee forms new to me, e.g. performance guarantees (covering performing of some work), tender guarantees (for abstract, immaterial purposes) and carnet guarantees

ticularly interested in these questions.

My second object was to study at Midland Bank Limited. I was at once struck by its immense proportions. It resembled an enormous factory with well oiled and perfectly trimmed machinery.

I was carried all over the Overseas Branch which in itself is a huge institution covering a staff of about 3.000 people. I was shown Foreign Exchange Department (payments out and in = Arbitrage Department), Correspondence (or Mail) Department, Cables, Inland Payments, Foreign Trade Information and Agency Arrangements.

Arbitrage Department was like a robot room: six gentlemen sitting at their tables with a keyboard of small multicoloured buttons before them, everybody giving and receiving orders by telephone. By pressing the buttons they got immediate contact with bankers and agents all over London.

Mail Department was an immense one covering one whole floor. I shall deal with this question later on.- The function of Foreign Trade Information Department was very interesting and quite new to me. In our circumstances its work would be carried out partly by the Legal Departments of our business banks and partly by Foreign Trade Associations. Here everybody could ask for suitable business contacts and make inquiries about the liability of some firm. Their ledgers and card-index seemed to cover almost all firms all over the world. This department had a statistic section, too. There you could find financial information about every country; bank and business reports; main statistic and economic papers from different countries; everything to satisfy a business and banking

interested mind. For the sake of curiosity I may tell that in the Finnish folder I found a booklet called "Hints to Business Men Visiting Finland" (giving among others the useful advice that "galoshes in the winter are worn everywhere in this country").

The name "Agency Arrangements" seemed at first rather strange and I could not even imagine what I should find there. As a fact it covered all the design work in connection with the bank's general circulars, advertising, pamphlets etc.

In Westminster Bank Limited I visited their Arbitrage and Mail departments. This latter was considerably smaller than Midland Bank's corresponding department owing to the fact that Westminster Bank has agencies all over the world dealing with all local correspondence whereas Midland Bank has branches only in England and consequently has to manage all its world-wide correspondence from the Overseas Branch.

With some pride they showed me their novelty: a teleprinter in work. They had daily about 175 outgoing and some less incoming teleprint cables and they were very satisfied with this system as both time and money sparing.

Both Midland Bank and Westminster Bank have comprehensive organisations for the social welfare of their staff. They have special Staff Training Centres in lovely surroundings in the country where the tuition is in the hands of men and women with wide experience in banking and staff training.

What especially Westminster Bank concerns I can tell that they have created not far from Oxford a centre where their junior

employees receive a sound training in the basic operations of banking, in surroundings which provide facilities for almost every kind of sporting, social and recreative activity. The course here normally lasts eight weeks, during which the trainee receives full salary, the cost of his maintenance and travelling expenses being paid by the bank. They also hope in due course to run a regular Summer School here, so that their senior employees who show marked ability may have an opportunity to develop their talents to the fullest advantage.

As to the pastime amenities these both banks have comprehensive Sports Clubs covering all kinds of hobbies from actual sports (athletics, bowls, cricket, football, rugby, hockey, tennis, netball, badminton, fencing, shooting, swimming, rowing) to billiard and more intellectual hobbies (music, drama, arts). Both banks have well-edited monthly magazines.- The organ corresponding to our "Officials' Association" is their Bank Guild, a negotiating body on all matters affecting the staff.

Everywhere in the banks I found the most kind and favourable attention and apart from the banking matters I was told many interesting facts about English living conditions and ways.

May I further tell something about my general impressions of London a.D. 1951, better referred to as Festival of Britain's London. This festival was planned in every detail years beforehand; British people were more than proud to celebrate the centenary of the famous "Crystal Palace" Exhibition in 1851 centralized to Hyde Park. A hundred years afterwards a magnificent ex-

hibition again was held, this time on the river Thames and called the South Bank Exhibition. It was erected only for temporary purposes except Royal Festival Hall, which with its most up-to-date and perfect accustic inventions is going to serve as the Londoners' second concert-hall after the huge Albert Hall.

Festival of Britain 1951 was to show to the world the progress Britain has made in the past hundred years, the development in science and culture which has been achieved, everything revealing Britain's pride in her past and the confidence in her future. It joined all British people together around one great symbol: reconstruction, work for the future peace and happiness. This plan seems to have succeeded excellently what its mental influence concerns - British people once more were conscious of their world power. Another point of view is that the inflow of tourists and with them foreign currency remained smaller than expected, as I was told.

Several times since I came back I have been asked a question: What is an average Englishman like? If I may try to tell some of my impressions, I should answer that he could not be more polite, helpful, courteous in all his behaviour. If you ask the man in the street about your way you can be sure that he - if needed - turns round from his own direction and in the most winning manner shows your way both with words and gestures. If you go to a shop and buy even the smallest article, you can be assured that the assistants pay all their attention just to your shopping. They discuss with unceasing interest qualities and quantities, ad-

vantages and disadvantages of your purchase, however small.

Well, British people are winning in their manners - but there is another aspect, too. When you get acquainted with somebody and in discussion approach some personal matter, you suddenly notice a change: he or she prefers to keep a certain distance and does not like to reveal his own attitude. You may at first feel a little hurt, you are accustomed to more open mind. The British correctness and discretion may be good qualities - but they keep you outside the real warm sympathy which makes the life worth living. I admit that there is another important fact, too, if you by chance succeed to make friends with an Englishman, you can count upon real and true friendship. Or is the person in question then perhaps a Scotch or a Welsh!

The question of British character is an extremely interesting subject. You could discuss it for hours with some Englishman, ask questions, argue, even dispute - and in the end find that your companion was only smiling at you - because you were an alien and as such expected to accept things and people just as they are without any personal standpoint. I never could find whether their tolerance was based on indifference or pride.

To pass on to more materialistic questions: the food situation has improved a little but seems still to be rather difficult. Almost all food, coffee making an exception, is rationed. English people get a paper-thin slice of meat once a week and one egg a week if there are any - usually there are not. I was told by an Englishman that once when he went to his usual dairy to

buy eggs - he had not taken out his ration for about one month - he received as much as two eggs; the other was stamped as originally Polish, the other **Turkish!** You can imagine, how fresh they tasted! - Well, those days are bygone when an average Englishman could not begin his day without a ham-and-egg-breakfast.

But even to-day British people are in some respects much better off than we in Finland: they have plenty and all kinds of fruits. For me it was like coming to an orchard to see all along the streets stalls with oranges, clementines, bananas, grapes, fresh ananas, not to mention such familiar fruits as pears, plums and apples.

How eager was I not at first to go "window-shopping" and how cheap did I not find everything! But later on, when I ventured to drop inside, I noticed a curious phenomenon: if there was something really first-class both in quality and fashion, it was terribly expensive - all the cheap things I had seen in the windows were only second-class. Well, they were price-controlled, utility stuff, and perhaps good as such but really not the money's worth.

What on the other hand is on most high level in England is their theatre life. Both to its quality and variety it is absolutely top-class but then Britain has a number of fine ancient and modern dramatists, an unrivalled classical heritage as well as actors of international reputation.

I was lucky enough to see "The Tempest" in the famous Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. The play was

put on stage with quite fantastic imagination, which seemed to be driven to perfection. The actors were all top-class and did not seem to act - they lived their roles. This theatre plays only Shakespeare and has a permanent, carefully selected cast. Every member of the cast may play whatever role from Hamlet down to the most unimportant one. This must be a good system because it enables the actor to transplant himself in the whole Shakespearian world and to put his soul into the various parts because every character and detail is familiar to him.

Another wonderful experience was to hear the famous Laurence Olivier wish his audience "Good Morning" at 2 o'clock in the morning! I succeeded to get tickets to a benevolence (night-) performance of Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra" with lovely Vivien Leigh in the other title-role.- In London it seemed to be a custom that after the performance the whole cast in rows was gathered on the stage for applauses and in more important theatres the main actor usually made a speech to his audience.

The concert life was very vivid: promenade concerts (conducted by such world-famous men as Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir John Barbirolli etc.) in the enormous Albert Hall drew public every night during the whole summer. This would be something for our music-lovers who have no possibilities to hear good music in summer-time. Please, consules, take this into consideration for next summer: our Olympic guests probably wish to hear Sibelius as he is played in his own country by his own countrymen!

Altogether my stay in London was so interesting and full

of new experiences that they could fill up one whole year under usual circumstances.

Much has been said about the great advantages of making new contacts with our colleagues abroad, which of course is most important and very interesting indeed. But almost as important is the fact that in this way we really learn to appreciate our own bank, our principals, our work, our conditions, I am full of ardent wishes to be able to use something of what I have learnt in my job and to the benefit of my bank.

I beg to express my most sincere thanks to the Board of Management of Suomen Pankki for the great advantage I have been granted. May I assure that this amount of goodwill from the bank's side will attach its employees with real interest and devotion to their daily work.

Helsinki, 6th January 1952.

Kerttu Saura