

The Swiss seen by a Swiss : "Oh, you speak English?" [continued]

Autor(en): [s.n.]

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Because of its many advantages, the apparatus can be profitably employed in many different branches, for reportage work in radio, films or the Press, for field work and even in offices. It would be particularly useful for the army, police and science.

The price of the apparatus, which will soon be mass produced, will be within the reach of many among those interested.

Two Swiss expeditions which are at present at work, the Mount Everest expedition and the one into the interior of the Sahara, are fitted out with this apparatus.

Switzerland and the European Payments Union

The agreement on the European Payments Union must be renewed in less than three months, as it terminates on June 30. The weakness of this organisation is demonstrated by the previous crisis in Germany, and also, the present crisis in Great Britain and France. Because of this, Switzerland has asked for two main reforms in the programme of the European Payments Union. First, the transfer of gold from countries in debt to the Union should be increased and accelerated. And, secondly, Switzerland believes that the Committee of Directors of the OECE should not rely upon intervention after a crisis has broken out in a country and after other countries are affected by it. They should, in the future, act when a country is first threatened by trouble.

A Useful Swiss Invention

A new direction-finding Automat was installed recently in the main railroad station in Zurich. Travellers who are unfamiliar with the city and who wish information about a definite street or house number insert a ten-centime coin into the machine and receive a small detailed map of the desired section. This Automat was constructed by an engineer in Basel, who has studied for years the question of direction-finding in large cities. The apparatus includes a large city-plan which is divided into one hundred areas. Each area has a button which when pressed will eject a printed form written in several languages with instructions about transportation in that particular section. This machine is the first of its kind in Europe and it has aroused interest in other large Swiss cities and in foreign countries.

The Swiss Apparatus of Television on its Way to New York

A new apparatus which will project coloured television on a movie screen has recently been sent from Zurich to New York. The projector is called an Eidophore, and it will be manufactured

by American firms for distribution on the American market, while Switzerland will make the projectors to be used in Europe. The Eidophore is an invention of the late Professor Fischer of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. It makes possible the clear projection of black and white and coloured pictures on surfaces larger than 100 square meters.

THE SWISS SEEN BY A SWISS

(Continued from last issue)

"Oh, you Speak English?"

When the British made the touristic discovery of Switzerland in the last century, they soon found out that successful holidaying was largely dependent on being understood by the natives. But how on earth was it possible to cope with three languages at once, especially as they all sounded so totally different from what stood in the dictionaries? Much to the visitors' relief the Swiss believed in the fact that the customer is always right, and so English became the current language in our holiday resorts.

Beginnings were difficult. Many may remember their first go at pronunciation, which invariably resulted in wondering why **tomb** was pronounced like **boom**, and why **cough** was not pronounced like **bough**. But somehow our forefathers seem to have overcome those set-backs, and more and more people took interest in that "mad" language, which, if not strictly logical, was at least useful.

The belief abroad that the average Swiss speaks English fluently grew slowly and steadily into a myth, and was only strengthened when the following news was spread in London circles. Two English tourists, who were caught in a thunderstorm somewhere in the Bernese Alps, sought refuge in a nearby chalet. In the doorway stood what they thought was a mountaineer, who, much to their surprise, welcomed them in perfect English. They spent the evening conversing on all sorts of subjects, and when the two left the following morning, they muttered under their breath: "Well, I'm blown!" It is only fair to add that this mountaineer was, in fact, a well-known Federal Councillor, who had met with the same misfortune as the two Englishmen, and had exchanged his wet clothes for an alpine outfit.

Nowadays, English is taught all over the country, from the colleges right down to grammar-school, and the attendance of evening-classes is ever-increasing. For those who do not like the idea of going back to classrooms, there is always "English by Radio," a B.B.C. programme gaining daily in popularity. May I, at this stage, express my thanks and admiration for our own "Kurzwellensender Schwarzenburg," whose transmissions are appreciated the world over, as much for its homely touch as for its unprejudiced news.

(To be continued.)