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communication between Geneva and Lausanne in the west and the Engadine in the east, and should prove a boon to both summer and winter visitors to Switzerland. Plans and concessions for the line were obtained as far back as 1908, and actual construction was started three years later. Work had, however, to be suspended on the outbreak of the war, but the line from Brig to Gletsch, the Rhine Glacier station, has been open since 1915. Lack of funds, however, prevented the completion of the whole enterprise until last April, when work was resumed and carried out with the utmost dispatch. The railway, which is of the narrow-gauge type, is operated by steam traction. In its stretch of 60 miles it passes over more than fifty viaducts and through twelve tunnels and several avalanche galleries. It reaches its highest point at Furka Station (7,093 ft.), after passing through a mile-long tunnel under the famous Furka Pass.

And for those others whose idea of bliss is Speed, especially speed attained under difficult circumstances, the Coupe Internationale des Alpes, described in the following, will bring a few thrills, no doubt. Says the *Motor* of April 13th (note the date!):—

#### Alpine Motor Trials.

Acceleration and brake test, and a 50 kilo. "resistance" test on bad surfaces, will be features of the trial, in addition to the reliability test over the whole distance of 3,295 miles.

Early in August a contest, organised by "L'Auto," will be held among the French Alps, starting at Nice and ending on the French shore of the Lac Léman. The daily distances will be easy compared with those to be covered in the other trials.

Greatest of all will be the first Coupe Internationale des Alpes, organised conjointly by France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland. Originally Austria was included, but withdrew owing to disagreement with the conditions of the contest. The trial will be a strenuous one, averaging 500 kilometres (310 miles) a day over the Central Alps. The different stages are as follows: August 19th, Milan to Nice; August 20th, rest at Nice; August 21st, Nice to Geneva; August 22nd, rest at Geneva; August 23rd, Geneva to Zurich; August 24th, rest at Zurich; August 25th, Zurich to Wiesbaden; August 26th, rest at Wiesbaden; August 27th, Wiesbaden to Merano; August 28th, rest at Merano; August 29th, Merano to Milan. Competing cars will be classified according to cylinder capacity.

But to conclude our "travelling" notes, as it were, further attention is being directed to—

#### Swiss Inland Navigation.

primarily, of course, with a view to getting less expensive means of goods transport, but offering, I should think, a slow and lazy way of seeing Switzerland to those who have time and the inclination for that sort of travel.

The *Newcastle Daily Journal and North Star* (April 16th) states:—

In view of the attention that is being directed to the question of inland navigation, a report just published by the Department of Overseas Trade on River Navigation to Switzerland is of interest. The report gives a full account of the inland traffic upon which Switzerland lays stress. The inference drawn so far is that the results of the 1925 shipping season clearly demonstrated that the large capital invested by Switzerland in Rhine shipping interests can only be made to pay when the duration of the shipping season between Strasbourg and Basle can be extended to more than 300 days a year, instead of from 90 to 180, as is the case at present. It is held by the Basle Shipping Board that with a yearly traffic of two million tons entering or leaving Switzerland by the Rhine route the saving in freight costs would amount to nearly five million Swiss francs a year. Switzerland is, therefore, keen on seeing her projects for the regularisation of the Rhine between Strasbourg and Basle carried out as soon as possible. The French projects for utilising the Rhône from the Swiss frontier onwards towards Lyons as a source of power, and for rendering that stretch of river navigable, have also been focusing the attention, not only of the Swiss authorities, but also of the public. These projects are coupled with those for the utilisation of the Lake of Geneva as a regulator of the flow of the Rhône, and their execution would involve variations of nearly two metres in the level of that lake. Such fluctuations would probably prove a source of great inconvenience to riparian proprietors; a strong opposition has therefore been growing among the public in Western Switzerland, and the Swiss delegates on the Franco-Swiss Rhône Commission have now proposed to limit the amplitude of these variations. The canal which was being made at Thoné (Canton Berne) to enable steamboats to moor alongside the railway station was completed and inaugurated in June last.

#### Success of Dead Man's Invention.

To the ordinary person it always seems that Steel is Steel, and that the metal necessarily is heavy. Why? the ordinary person, of course,

could not tell. But it is at least somewhat startling to read the following.

*Sunday Express* (April 18th):—

A new steel invented by M. Boshard, a Swiss engineer, of Zurich, who died a few months ago, is now claimed to be 40 per cent. lighter and 30 per cent. cheaper than the present product. Experts recently tested the steel at Zurich and Dresden, and reported that the new steel is specially suitable for building railway bridges.

Fancy, Steel weighing 40 per cent. less than Steel, and 30 per cent. cheaper. I have renewed hopes of being able, by and by, to exchange my "bus" for a real car!

The Budget Speech has not exactly stunned me, as it was not to be expected that the present Government could cut into the flesh of its supporters too much. The steady increase in expenditure is a phenomenon which I understand from personal experience, but which must be condemned all the same as unhealthy and antagonistic to the interests of the community. I have spoken!

I might be justified in feeling gloomy to-day. Beer is not going to be cheaper, nor is the income-tax going to be less, and although I do take coffee regularly after meals, I don't think that the chicory excise repeal will make me happier. And I am much too gentle to harbour any malicious joy over the prospects of some of my more fortunate—in point of cash—friends having to pay more tax on their posh cars, whereas my modest 12-H.P. will jog along at the same rate, which is anyhow too much already.

But at the back of my head there is an uneasy feeling to-day, due probably to the fact that the Budget ought to have been much better and failed to be so. On the other hand, it may be an attack of 'flu, or of the blues, or anything. However, let's not talk about it any longer and get on with the job.

#### The French-Swiss Free Zones.

The next unpleasant item in our list is the following from the *Manchester Guardian* of 16th April:—

The Foreign Minister, M. Motta, has made an important statement in the Swiss Senate on the Free Zones dispute between France and Switzerland. Since 1919 France and Switzerland have been in disagreement as to whether the free zones between Geneva and Upper Savoy are legally still in existence, and as to what should be the new economic relations between the populations in those districts. In November, 1923, the Poincaré Government, which had always refused the Swiss proposals to submit the dispute to arbitration, virtually abolished the free zones by posting French Customs officers directly on the French-Swiss frontier, notwithstanding a Swiss protest. In the autumn of 1924 M. Herriot came to an agreement with the Swiss Government under which the question whether the free zones conformed to international law should be submitted to the World Court. After the Court decision the French and Swiss Governments were to enter into negotiations on the economic situation. If agreement were still impossible, the World Court should also arbitrate on the economic aspects of the dispute.

This arbitration treaty was ratified by Switzerland nearly a year ago, but the French Parliament has not yet discussed it. French suggestions were made to Switzerland that M. Motta should not insist on a decision by the World Court, but should immediately enter into economic negotiations. Obviously the French hoped that Switzerland would come to accept the abolition of the free zones as an accomplished fact, and be willing to negotiate in order to get better economic conditions than those imposed by Poincaré's arbitrary act.

M. Motta has now declared in the most categorical terms that the Swiss Government absolutely refuses to enter into any economic negotiations on this matter before France has ratified the Herriot treaty and the legal dispute has been submitted to the World Court. The determination of the Swiss Government to get international justice is by no means weakened by the economic pressure exerted since November, 1923.

Concerning the above, I refrain from further comments. They seem not called for. The only comment I will make is to express thanks to Providence for providing our country with a man of the stamp of Mr. Motta. We need him.

My readers will—or will not, as the case may be—remember the controversy which arose in these columns some months ago anent the question of Swiss-Russian Relations.

Since then has come the attack of Chicherin, an attack directed not so much against Switzerland as against the League of Nations and the Powers connected with it, and especially their motives in calling the Disarmament Conference. However justified our Government may have been in its attitude, regret is still being expressed by many influential newspapers that a formula was not found to bridge over the difficulties, and frequent mention is made of the nefarious influence exercised over the Swiss Government by a certain class of our citizens who thought they were right in seeing 'red.' 'C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas politique' we might now say to them!

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