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HOME NEWS

A somewhat doubtful point in the minds of motorists has been set at rest by a recent decision of the Federal Tribunal. It refers to an accident which happened as far back as July, 1925 when on the road between Lausanne and Moudon a motor cyclist was killed in a collision with a motor car. It was admitted that the cyclist was travelling on the wrong side of the road and as in approaching the car he did not appear to have any intention of altering his course the chauffeur, in order to avoid a head-on impact, swerved to the left (the latter's wrong side) to allow the cyclist to pass; at the same moment, however, the cyclist corrected his direction with the result that a fatal collision took place in the middle of the road. The Lausanne Tribunal upheld the judgment of the Vaudois courts by which the motorist, though acquitted of manslaughter, was held partly responsible for the accident and mulcted in damages to the family of the victim. It is therefore evident that a motorist is bound by law to keep to his proper side of the road even if an accident is imminent. * * *

Though suggestions to the contrary have recently appeared in Swiss Laifour papers it is now officially stated that the central council of the Swiss Socialist Party is not disposed to favour the candidature of a representative in the Federal Council. * * *

For the construction of a new arsenal, in place of the one recently destroyed by fire, the Grand Council of Fribourg has voted a credit of Frs. 820,000. * * *

The resident population of the town of Zurich has increased during October by 2,750 and is now computed to be 227,200. * * *

In an official communication from the Swiss Tourist Office the acceptance of the initiative demand for the re-introduction of gaming tables at the casinos and hotels patronised by foreign visitors is warmly recommended. The matter will be submitted to the vote of the Swiss electorate on December 2nd. * * *

The Bernese National History Society has elected Melle. Viviane de Wattenwyl an honorary member. Some time ago she accompanied her late father on an expedition in Central Africa, when he was killed by a lion; she continued her father's research work and brought home a valuable collection which she presented to the local museum. * * *

The world-wide storm during the last week-end has caused considerable damage in the central part of Switzerland and has in one instance been responsible for the loss of three lives. A small steamer on the Zurich lake, carrying stone and sand, was caught by a terrific gale near the isle of Ufenau, and sank within a few minutes. The crew of four jumped into the water but only one of them was able successfully to fight the tremendous waves; he clung to a protruding rock until help arrived from the shore. * * *

Philanthropic institutions in Andelfingen (Zurich) have benefited to the amount of Frs. 74,000 through legacies left by the late Dr. med. W. Breiter. * * *

The editor of a Basle Labour paper has been fined Frs. 230 for having published disparaging statements about an affluent local Communist. * * *

Federal Councillor Musy has been laid up with an attack of appendicitis from which he is slowly recovering. * * *

Col. Ed. Usteri-Pestalozzi, a well-known banker and philanthropist, died in Zurich at the age of 78.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Neuzeitliche Klubs zur Hebung der Gemüthlichkeit.—In Brugg hat sich ein Klub gegründet, der sich den schönen Namen "Höcker-Klub" beigelegt und seine Getreuen jüngst zu einem "Sausen-Hock" mit Freimacht eingeladen hat. Wer möchte da nicht mitmachen, besonders in der gegenwärtigen Epoche, wo man mangels von Vergnügungsanlässen so selten Gelegenheit hat, länger sitzen zu bleiben als bis Zwölfe. Diesem Leidwesen hat der Klub ein Ende gemacht, denn die Klubmitglieder sind zum "Hock-en" verpflichtet, wobei die Gemüthlichkeit Trumpf ist.

Ein interessantes Gegenstück zu diesem Klub pantoffelfreier Männer ist in einem kleinen Städtchen an der Aare entstanden, nämlich "Der Klub der fideilen Frauen." Welcher Mann sollte da nicht nach dem offiziellen Kommerz als auserwähltes Ehrenmitglied oder Gast das Präsidium übernehmen und für die Fidelität sein Zepter schwingen wollen? Ein wirklich beneidenswertes Ehrenamt! Vielleicht gesellt sich als drittes Glied zur Hebung der Gemüthlichkeit noch ein Klub, der sich nennt: "Klub der schönen, rassigen Frauen"! —*Neue Argauer Ztg., Aarau.*

Unsere Gesandtschaften.—Die Schweiz besitzt zur Zeit 16 Gesandtschaften, von denen indessen jene in Petrograd seit 1918 nicht mehr besetzt ist. Die verbleibenden 15 Gesandtschaften beziehen laut Budget für 1928 Jahresgehälter in der Gesamthöhe von 625,000 Franken. Dazu kommen noch die Besoldungen und Zulagen für das Personal im Totalbetrag von 1,514,675 Fr. Der Personalbestand unserer Gesandtschaften beträgt rund 170 Mann, wobei die Gesandtschaften in Paris mit 28 Köpfen, in London mit 20, in Berlin mit 19, Washington mit 12 und Rom mit 11 Personen oben an stehen; es folgen weiter Wien, Buenos-Aires und Madrid mit je 9 Personen, Warschau und Brüssel mit je 8, Athen und Prag mit je 6, Bukarest, Belgrad und Rio de Janeiro mit je 5, Tokio mit 4, der Haag und Stockholm mit je 3 Mann Personal. Zu den oben angeführten ordentlichen Gehältern kommen noch Zulagen, Reiseentschädigungen und Unzinskosten in der Höhe von 470,000 Fr., ferner 311,000 Franken für Miete, Heizung, Beleuchtung und Unterhalt der Kanzleien und 190,000 Fr. für Post- und Telegraphengebühren, Mobiliaranweisungen und Bürokosten, so dass der Bund für seine Gesandtschaften insgesamt rund 3,1 Millionen Franken auszugeben hat. Weitere 2,3 Millionen Fr., sind nötig für die Konsulate mit ihrem Stabe von 220 Personen, wodurch die Kosten für unsere gesamte Ausservertretung auf 5,4 Millionen zu stehen kommen. —*Ostschweiz Tagblatt.*

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

All the illustrated weeklies have issued special winter sports numbers and it wants a brave man to resist the lure of the wonderful alpine pictures—always assuming that he is the lucky possessor of an adequate bank balance. The choice of cloth comes in for most of the comment and advice, the attractions of the different resorts being often a secondary consideration. One paper thus summarizes the characteristics of the generally patronized places:—At Murren, all the people are terribly busy being public-school boys. At St. Moritz, everyone is busy being a Guards' officer and drinking champagne cocktails. At Grindelwald, everyone is busy being an old-fashioned English style skater. At Wengen, everyone is busy practising for the gold ski and making cross-country runs. Each of these four chief resorts, in fact, is utterly different. So now you know.

Swiss Industries.

The Swiss Office for the Development of Trade has issued in English an attractive pamphlet with two maps and 23 photographs, containing a great deal of useful information about our industries, communications, economic relations with other countries, etc. We believe a limited supply of these pamphlets is still available at our London Legation; the following summary is taken from the *Statist* (Nov. 10th):—

"It has often been observed that foreign business interests possess very little knowledge of the economic structure of Switzerland. This is all the more surprising as Switzerland buys almost as much merchandise from foreign countries as is purchased by Spain, with a population five times as great, and sells more goods abroad than are sold by Spain and Portugal combined. The publication of a booklet in English, dealing with economic activities in Switzerland, by the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, is therefore particularly welcome. Switzerland has developed from an agricultural to a predominantly industrial country, becoming more dependent upon foreign supplies of raw materials and foodstuffs, with a tendency for its own industries to become more and more specialised. Among the raw materials imported those for the textile industry represent the highest value, followed by coal, iron, steel and other metals, building materials, timber and raw chemical products. Foodstuffs represent 28 per cent. of total imports.

Manufactured products represent four-fifths of the total of Swiss exports, and among the various branches of production for export the

textile group is the most important. The spinning and weaving of silk forms one of the chief activities of the textile branch, and within recent years, the artificial silk industry has been largely developed. The cotton industry employs 28,000 persons, but the bulk of the output is absorbed in the country itself, chiefly by connected industries. The woollen industry has grown considerably in the German part of the country, while knitting and hosiery rank among the leading export trades. The production of electric energy, and its distribution at great distances have contributed considerably to the development of the machine industry in Switzerland. Hydro-electric energy is a big asset in Swiss economy, for its exportation has been developing rapidly in recent years, yet only 73 per cent. of the total water power available has so far been utilised, though 97 per cent. of the population is supplied with electric energy, and the main railway lines are electrified.

The machine and metal industries are surpassed in importance only by textiles, and it is in the construction of various types of motors, such as electric and steam turbines and the Diesel engine that the largest output is registered. Swiss textile machinery has a considerable reputation abroad as have also Swiss pumps of all kinds. There is scarcely a single branch of machine construction in which Switzerland has not a speciality, and the manufacture of special machines for the food industry, breweries, the making of cement, paper and printing has opened up a large field of activity. Swiss cast steel made in electric ovens is exported in large quantities, while aluminium bars and aluminium products, in the production of which Switzerland ranks third among the countries of the world, are valued, for export, at over 55 million francs annually. The heavy chemical industry in Switzerland is still relatively young and its activity is closely linked up with that of the electricity industry, as certain works are engaged not only in the production of electric energy, but also in the manufacture of acids and salts. In spite of keen foreign competition, the output of Swiss dyes is steadily increasing. The Swiss watch-making industry continues to hold its own as first in the world, while the boot and shoe industry has rapidly developed. The total output of Swiss shoemaking firms, of which there are about 30, is nearly 7,000,000 pairs per annum, of which 2,000,000 pairs are exported. The competition from Swiss shoe-wear has been acutely felt by manufacturers in this country, which is one of the chief export markets for these goods.

The total foreign trade figure per head of the population places Switzerland first among the industrial countries of the world. The population enjoys a very high standard of living, the basis of which is due to the thrifty habits of the community. This is reflected in savings bank returns and in insurance business. At the close of 1926, the total amount of the insurance deposits reached 2,957 million francs, against 980 million francs at the end of 1917. In 1927, the average number of life insurance policies taken out per hundred families was 78, compared with 34 in 1913."

A School above the Clouds.

A great many of our mountain hotels serve no useful purpose in winter, which means that during the few summer months in which they are open, they are forced to cover the expenses for the whole of the year. The proprietor of a Bernese Overland establishment has had the novel idea of running a winter school for teaching English. The English master in charge of the educational scheme has sent the following report to the *Times* (Nov. 17th), Educational Supplement:—

"On a narrow ledge, some four miles in length, 3,600 ft. above sea level, and 1,600 ft. above Lake Thun, lies the sunny village of St. Beatenberg, looking across to the Jungfrau, the Schreckhorn, Eiger, and Mönch. Nearly all the hotels in the mountain cantons are closed from October 15th to December 15th, and even in December only a few which are favourably situated open again for winter sports. Though Beatenberg has winter sports, only about two of the dozen hotels cater for them.

The owner of one of the hotels has had the excellent idea of utilizing his hotel, in the close period, for the instruction of young Swiss students in the English language. There are many young people in Switzerland ardently desirous of acquiring English who cannot afford to go to England for it. The hotel proprietor obtained permission from the authorities at Berne,

and the school is now an accomplished fact, with a session of ten weeks. The first course, now in progress, is being attended by 20 pupils, whose ages range from 18 to 40 years. They are chiefly hotel servants, and have come determined to learn the language. If young people in England could see the avidity with which these Swiss servants absorb and understand the intricacies of a foreign language they would realize how it is that foreigners find so many of the staff of Swiss hotels can speak to them in their own tongues. It is not uncommon even for a hotel station-porter, whose salary, exclusive of tips, may be only 30 francs per month, to be able to converse in six or seven languages. These people seem to have a natural ability in the acquisition of foreign languages. Though I had retired from active teaching in London, the temptation was too great to resist when asked to undertake the duty again in such ideal surroundings and in this fairland of beauty I do not regret my decision."

Talking about education, there is an interesting comparison in the same issue of the *Times* about

Examinations in Switzerland.

The writer compares the procedure at the free State—or public—schools in Switzerland with the big "public"—or private—schools in this country: "Swiss educationists, like the educationists of other countries, are feeling their way towards the solution of the examination problem. Not much has been done in abolishing examinations for the selection of pupils for the secondary schools; the adoption of other methods appears rather in the awarding of the matriculation certificate.

Swiss primary education, fortunately or unfortunately as the case may be, is left entirely to the Cantonal authorities. As there is only the vaguest attempt at Federal control, conditions prevailing in these schools are bound to differ widely with regard to the standard and the kind of work done. This does not apply to the secondary schools that prepare for the universities or for the Technical High School, which is a Federal university. As their curriculum has to cover a certain prescribed ground, the secondary schools must obviously restrict their numbers to pupils that seem fit for the more advanced work.

This selection is made in the majority of Swiss secondary schools by an entrance examination, which combines a written test in different subjects with an interview in the same subjects. The latter is generally given preponderance over the result of the written examination. In case of doubt, the candidate is given a chance to prove his mettle in a so-called probationary term. In some cases, the headmaster relies on the record brought from the last school attended, but some find this unsatisfactory, as the method of keeping records is not yet systematic enough.

As there are in Swiss secondary schools no scholarships in the English sense of the word, there is not the same need as in England for competitive examination. Financial help does not depend on the outcome of any test-paper, a free place being given to any pupil applying for it, provided he shows promise in his work. In awarding the matriculation certificate, however, the Swiss authorities have departed from the ordinary examination system. In the first place, most of the State secondary schools and a few private ones (there are, of course, only a few private schools) are entitled to award their pupils the matriculation certificate on the completion of their course. To prevent an indiscriminate use of this right, an agreement has been reached between the Universities on the one hand and the boards of the various secondary schools on the other. Scholastic institutions desiring to come under the above agreement, have to fulfil certain minimum demands as regards the number of subjects taught and the standard of the work done, and they are subject to inspection by the Federal Board of secondary education.

Pupils are to some extent weeded out during the school course. If a pupil fails to secure a sufficient percentage in his year's work he is sent down—a procedure more easily carried out where the majority of schools are run by the State. The examination at the end of the school career, set by the staff and corrected by the staff, is followed by an interview in at least four subjects which may vary according to the type of school. The interview is supervised by members of the school board. For the matriculation certificate the year's marks count at least one-half, sometimes even two-thirds, and the examination results count for the rest. To eliminate still further the danger of putting a premium on mere

memory work, examiners are particularly required to try to ascertain the candidate's judgment and his power of reasoning rather than the amount of knowledge he has acquired. This last stipulation, and the fact that the school work of the candidate is taken into account, should go far to make examinations what they should be—an effort to gauge the mental ripeness of the future student. To entrust the examination to the secondary school puts indeed no mean responsibility on its shoulders; on the other hand, as experience shows, confidence in a man calls forth the will to justify the trust placed in him."

Vintage Days.

Here is another description of the gaiety of grape gathering in Switzerland. As in France, this year's vintage promises to be an exceptionally good one, so that our friends who distribute these wines in our Colony may look forward to a busy time:—

"The vintage in Switzerland falls early or late, according to the behaviour of King Sol during the summer. This year it has been early, and in spite of terrific hailstorms which have wrecked whole vineyards in some parts of the country, and pitted the grapes in others, the quality of the wine is excellent, even if the quantity is small. The grapes, heavy and sweet, are yielding delicious new wine, and, as usual, lovers of old traditions have been passing their Sundays in visiting favourite districts, there to taste the bubbling "moût," as the new wine is called, and pay calls on old friends whose cellars keep open house.

For the Swiss wine-growers are a race apart, conservative folk, not given to change, and always ready to receive their cronies in their vast, rambling, old stone crypts, where huge barrels of famous dimensions promise endless enjoyment to the connoisseurs hospitably invited to taste the contents. The rite is scrupulously observed, the host turning the spigot himself, drawing off a little wine first, then filling the thick glasses of the assembled company. After which he lifts his glass, and, having critically regarded its contents at the level of his eyes, he pronounces the formula "A votre santé," and his visitors echo in chorus "A la vôtre," and all proceed to business. The talk at vintage-time is strictly limited to the work of the vine-dressers, their difficulties, the ills to which the vine is heir, the quantity of grapes this season compared with that of other years, and reminiscences of bumper gatherings.

This year the grape-gathering has been very gay, for weather has been kind. From early morning till late afternoon, the sun has beamed down upon merry companies of men and women, lads and girls, the women nearly all with bright red kerchiefs round their heads, the men carrying, up and down the steep paths, the heavy wooden back-buckets containing the purple and golden grapes to be consigned to the wine-press. The long narrow wooden carts have been seen on all roads above the lake, with their huge vats holding the precious harvest, while laughter, and often song, has filled the air.

Fine weather makes all the difference to a good grape-gathering; the fruit is in better condition, the heavy soil does not clog the boots of the gatherers, and fatigue with its weight the men who have to plod ceaselessly down to the vats or press with their tiring load; and the wine made during a dry and sunny October is always superior in quality. No wonder then that this year the grapes were got in quickly, and that the bunches of gay autumn flowers stuck in the bung-holes of each long barrel, as the last load is triumphantly transported homewards, have been extra large. Even the shaggy horses drawing the long-shafted carts have come in for a share of floral decoration, and some of the peasants have even gone so far as to put a bright-coloured ribbon on their whip.

Now the first snow has powdered the Alps, the air is chilly, and the golden and scarlet leaves that make autumn in Switzerland such a feast of beauty for the eye are already falling as the cold rain touches them. Woe to the tardy vine-dresser whose last vineyard is not yet stripped, and whose sparkling "moût" is not adding its quota to the scent of wine that fills the air of the little town. His procrastination will have cost him dear, and he is likely to pull a long face when he remembers the vintage days of 1928."

Civil Aviation.

From the *Times* (November 10th):—

"Interest in flying, from the commercial point of view, is steadily on the increase, so much so, that the Swiss Aero-Club are preparing to offer financial assistance not only to would-be pilots, who are not in a position to meet the expense of the necessary course for obtaining a pilot's licence, but also to fully fledged pilots of modest means, in order that the latter may be able to maintain and improve their knowledge of flying. The Swiss Aero-Club intend to purchase a number of light aeroplanes, which they will place at the disposal of the members of the club and the general flying public. It is proposed to organize a special information office for air travel. The Vice-President of the Committee for the creation of an air-port at Berne is flying over

to London shortly in order to discuss ways and means for the promotion of air traffic between the Federal City and Great Britain."

The Oldest Inhabitant.

This refers to a cheese and the reference is taken from the *Manchester Guardian* (November 12th). If this rare exhibit can survive the journey across the Channel, we know of a restaurant in Newgate Street where it would find itself at home:

"Something very handsome ought to be made by the humorists out of the story that a cheese dating from the year 1778 has just been exhibited at an agricultural show in Switzerland. The Jest of the Ancient Cheese is a venerable favourite among simple souls, and as this Swiss example must be the oldest cheese in the world, the quips and japes that ripen round it should be almost as rich as the cheese itself. Nothing is said about what the cheese tastes like; we are only told that it is regarded as a family heirloom (as well it may be) and that it weighs a stone. It sounds rather as though it never has been tasted and never will be; it is a "collector's piece," to be loaned to agricultural shows instead of being presented at table. This is a pity—one would like to know what a cheese made before the French Revolution tastes like, though it might demand a certain amount of courage to make the experiment. The first man to eat an oyster is usually cited as one of the world's gastronomic heroes, but the first man to dig into this venerable survival in Switzerland would be no coward. Perhaps he should be allowed to work his courage up on Napoleon brandy before assaulting the pre-Revolution cheese."

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