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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

MOTOR-CAR IMPORTS UP.

During 1929 motorcars have been imported into Switzerland amounting to 77.3 million francs, or two million more than 1928. The exportation of cars and accessories reached a total of 18 million francs, nearly three-quarters of a million less than during the preceding year. T.G.

IMPORTANT CONTRACT FOR SWISS FIRM.

A triumph for Swiss industry and technical achievement is the fact, that the construction of the first tunnel to be built in Egypt has been entrusted to Rothpletz & Lienhard, of Berne. Rothpletz is well-known as a former National Councillor and member of the S.B.B. board of administration, as well as builder of the Weissenstein- and Grenchenberg tunnels, two constructions which offered exceptional difficulties owing to water and peculiar geological hindrances. N.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

Salomon Gessner's 200th birthday is on April 1st next. The Lesezirkel Hottingen and the Swiss Association of Authors, as well as the Swiss Association of Painters, Sculptors and Architects, have submitted a petition to the Authorities to convert Waldhaus Sihlbrugg, Gessner's summer residence, into a Salomon Gessner museum and to erect a monumental fountain in the Sihlthal in memory of the famous citizen. N.Z.Z.

BERNE.

The 17th Annual Report of "Pro Juventute" shows the wonderful development of this meritorious work. From Fs. 127,593.90 in 1912 the net proceeds of the sales of stamps and cards have increased to Fs. 531,757.40 in 1928. N.Z.Z.

The Federal Council has decided to accept the offer of Carl Spitteler's heirs to present to the Nation all manuscripts and documents left by him. The collection will be housed either in the Federal Archives, or in the Lucerne Town Library. St. G.T.

Statistics compiled by the Department of Political Economy show that 36 strikes and 2 lock-outs took place in 1929, with a loss of nearly 100,000 working days. N.Z.Z.

URI.

24-years old Anton Ziegler, of Flüelen, was caught in the machinery of a dredger and killed. N.Z.Z.

BASLE.

A few days ago the demolition of the house "zum Trübel" at the Bäumlengasse was started. This house was built in 1430, and with it disappears a further relic of the old town. N.

NEUCHÂTEL.

A terrible accident happened at La Chaux-de-Fonds where Mme. Laure Bourguin, a sexagenarian, was filling her burning oven with old paper. The flames shot back and caught her dress. She was unable to call for help and was found completely carbonised. ***

The "Banque cantonale neuchâteloise" is likely to suffer severe losses in giving credit to a La Chaux-de-Fonds house which has failed. It is estimated, that the loss in connection with the firm Invar will amount to between 4 and 5 million francs. The magistrate has granted a stay of execution in order to prevent the disastrous consequences of a "krach" and to facilitate the liquidation of the firm. T.G.

The Council of Administration of the bank has issued the following communiqué to the press.

"In accordance with the mandate given to it by law the 'Banque cantonale neuchâteloise' has always endeavoured to assist, as widely as possible, commerce, industry and agriculture in the canton, and the only approach which could have been lodged is that they might have granted too large credits to reliable and trusted business houses. This refers especially to the case Invar.

As soon as the bank found out that they were likely to suffer losses with this establishment they did all in their power to save the situation, until at last they had to stop any further help. The liquidation of Invar will without doubt bring large losses to the bank, although there are no definite figures to hand as yet. However, there can be no question of attaching any blame to the bank."

The communiqué then refers to the difficulties in the watch trade and concludes: "In order to continue its mission the bank needs the confidence of all; this confidence it fully deserves and there is nothing in the actual state of affairs to injure it." J.G.

VAUD.

M. Henri Savary-Pitte, the doyen of the vaudois teachers, has recently died at the age of 82, at Sassel near Payerne, where he was for 50 years teaching before his retirement in 1918. He was a pioneer for the inclusion of agricultural science in the school syllabus and had a profound knowledge of the dialects in the French-speaking parts of Switzerland. ***

Shortly after having left the station at Lyss a goods train was derailed causing an obstruction of the line and damage to the engine and several wagons. Fortunately no one was injured and the traffic could be diverted to other lines. The cause of the accident is not yet known. T.G.

APPENZEL.

A while ago, a building belonging to the Urnäsch workhouse burned down. One of the inmates had been chopping wood in the destroyed building and was under the impression that by smoking he may have been the unwitting cause of the fire. Although it was established beyond doubt that he was not to blame, the whole matter so pressed on his mind, that he committed suicide. St. G.T.

ST. GALL.

The Cantonal Assizes have sentenced Schneider, former school treasurer at Murg to 18 months penal servitude for having fraudulently converted to his own use 22,500 Francs obtained from taxation and for fraudulent bankruptcy. ***

Part of the Textilwerke Blumenegg near Goldach have suffered heavy damage by fire. N.Z.Z.

Dr. Eduard Scherrer, for 28 years Mayor of St. Gall, has decided to retire on June 30th next. ***

The covered wooden bridge crossing the Rhine at Schmitter has disappeared. Its renewal was accomplished in a very few days. The wood will be sold by auction. ***

On the initiative of the Liberal-Democratic Party, the Communal Council has elected a commission of seven members to study ways and means of bringing home industry a much needed fillip and to find work for the empty premises formerly occupied by Wier & Ross. St. G.T.

GRAUBÜNDEN.

Federal State Councillor Colonel Brügger died at Chur on January 29th. N.Z.Z.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

It is sometimes very difficult indeed to write these Notes and Gleanings, because it occasionally happens that the British Press finds little of interest to publish about Switzerland and during such weeks we only get winter-sports articles and perhaps a few purely commercial reports. It also happens, if truth must be told, that Kyburg sometimes does not feel quite the industrious chap who he ought to be. These remarks are the outcome of a shock I experienced when opening our last issue and finding that the Editor had cut out quite a few articles I had sent in. It is true, I had sent in the articles with just a word to say that they were interesting enough in themselves without any more or less appropriate remarks from me, but the Editor evidently thought otherwise. Hence a very dull issue of the S.O., I thought, modestly!

However, we are going to make up for it this week, and my task is rendered fairly easy, because I have found a lot of very unusual and interesting items. Some there are which made me feel very proud as a Swiss, but, alas, there are others which made my good old Swiss blood tingle with shame and made me long to travel over to Switzerland to launch a furious campaign with a view

to cleaning up some Augean stables evidently requiring such a process.

A Nation of Inventors:

Dublin Evening Herald, 24th Jan.

A compilation of statistics on patents granted by civilised countries to their own citizens and to citizens of other countries shows Swiss citizens leading all other nationals both in patents taken out at home and in those taken out abroad. In 1925, for every million of population Switzerland obtained 930 patents abroad, against Austria's 299, Germany's 271, France's 195, Britain's 188, Belgium's 180, and the United States' 160.

Records disclose a long list of distinguished Swiss inventors and scientists, whose original work has richly endowed the world since those early days of religious strife. There was that father of pharmacy, Philippus Anreolus Paracelsus Bombastus, born about 1493, who is said to have been the first man to combine chemistry and medicine. There was Jaquet Droz, whose inventive skill produced the first automatic figures, mechanical dolls moving their finger joints. There were Ferdinand Berthoud, inventor of naval clocks, and Abraham Louis Brequet, who perfected an instrument for measuring time. Jean Andre de Luc, geologist and chemist; Louis Agassiz, scientist; Lavater, physiognomist and Pestalozzi, educationist, are on the list, though their contributions to scientific development may not be strictly termed inventions.

While the world must thank Switzerland for many inventions not recorded in patent offices, it was for her fine hand-made watches that she first attained fame among other nations. A Burgundian clockmaker, Charles Cusin, introduced the art of watchmaking into Switzerland in 1587. At the time Cusin settled in Geneva that city already enjoyed a certain reputation for craftsmen jewellers. Fine goldsmith work was gaining ground in the north. One hundred years after Cusin opened his first workshop Switzerland was turning out 5,000 watches a year. By 1856 it was producing 800,000 in the canton of Neuchâtel alone.

Guilds are formed with regulations governing relationship between master and man. These guild regulations were clearly set forth, and the system of apprenticeship thereunder strictly adhered to. Apprentices became masters, who handed on their delicate craft to other apprentices, sometimes sons, who in their turn became leaders in the craft in which they excelled. Though Geneva long kept her eminence as the home of fine watches, other districts set up factories and shops that eventually gained renown.

The story of Daniel Jean-Richard is the story of a blacksmith turned watchmaker, who founded the great watchmaking industry that subsequently flourished in the cantons through the Neuchâtel mountains. It was in 1679 that Jean-Richard mended a watch for a passing traveller, the first watch he had ever seen. After that while working at his trade, for which he had no love, he dreamed of delicate watchmaking, and in his leisure hours lovingly fashioned fine tools for the craft that held his imagination. He continued to invent and originate fine tools, and in 1705 set up a workshop for watchmaking at Le Locle. The first workshop became a series of factories, and in 1886 Neuchâtel raised a monument to the memory of the blacksmith who laid the foundations of its greatest industry.

The watch industry appealed to men with artistic tastes, and it also fostered research in mechanical combinations. A Swiss named Georges Leschot introduced the machine-made watches to Geneva. Observations were established for timing clocks astronomically. Other inventions attracted men of genius to a Switzerland busy with a hundred new mechanical devices.

It is not only in industrial inventions that the Swiss have achieved fame. Swiss names are numerous among engineers achieving distinction in the field. Horace Benedict de Saussure invented a thermometer for ascertaining the temperature of water at all depths, and another instrument for showing electrical conditions of the atmosphere. Daniel Bernoulli was the first to produce the propulsion of ships by the reaction of a stream of water thrown backward. It was the researches of Pierre Louis Guinand, a Swiss optician, which made possible the