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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS EXPORTS.

The slight improvement recorded in Swiss trade during the first half of the year was continued in July. While imports for that month were 128,450,208f., against 132,377,271f. in July, 1932, and 137,287,593f. in June last, exports at 68,543,989f. show a rise of 9,879,356f. over July, 1932, and of 111,138f. over June last. The improvement is chiefly in the watchmaking industry, the exports of which aggregated 38,300,000f., or 4,587,000 pieces, during the first seven months of the year, against 34,600,000f., or 3,479,000 pieces, during the corresponding period of 1932.

The improvement in the watch industry and in some branches of the textile and machinery industries resulted in a decrease in unemployment from 53,860 at the end of June to 50,864 at the end of July. In July last year there was a rise of nearly 4,000. Since the beginning of 1933, when 110,111 unemployed were registered, there has been a drop of 50 per cent. Further, the summer season has been better than expected and the tourist traffic more active, so that prospects are now more encouraging than they were at any time last year.

MINISTER DINICHERT AND THE NUERNBERG CONGRESS.

The participation of M. Dinichert, Swiss Minister in Berlin, at the Nürnberg Congress, has given rise to various comments in Switzerland.

The Federal Council has discussed the matter at their Meeting of the 5th inst., and has come to the unanimous conclusion, that Minister Dinichert has acted rightly, in accepting the invitation to be present, as no less than 30 representatives of foreign countries had followed the invitation of the Reich. Owing to the, at present, strained relations between the two countries, a non-acceptance of the above-mentioned invitation, might have been taken as an unfriendly act by the government of the Reich.

MEETING OF SWISS DIPLOMATS.

The annual conference of the Swiss diplomatic representatives took place last Saturday at Berne. Ten out of 15 of our foreign representatives took part in the conference, namely M. Dumant (Paris); Barbey (Brussels); de Pury (Lugano); Lardy (Stockholm); Egger (Madrid); Wagnière (Rome); von Segesser (Warsaw); de Weck (Buccarest); Gertsch (Rio de Janeiro); and Jaeger (Vienna); Messieurs Dinichert (Berlin); Paravicini (London); Peter (Washington); Traversini (Buenos Aires); and Martin (Stockholm) were excused from attending.

NEW GERMAN MINISTER AT THE FEDERAL PALAIS.

Baron de Weizsäcker, the newly appointed German Minister has presented his credentials to the President of the Swiss Confederation. M. de Weizsäcker, who is fifty years old, has entered the diplomatic service in 1920, he was German Consul at Basle in 1922. In 1924 he was appointed Councillor of Legation at Copenhagen. In 1928 we see him director of the "Office de la Société d. Nations" at the German Foreign Office, and later on, German Minister at Oslo.

NEW PORTUGUESE MINISTER.

M. Schulthess, President of the Swiss Confederation, has received the newly appointed Portuguese Minister, M. Lobo d'Avila Lima.

SWISS FRONTIER GUARDS REINFORCED.

The Customs authorities at Berne have decided to reinforce the guards on the German frontier. As a result of the recent incidents, when parties of Germans have "violated" the frontier. Patrols will consist of at least two men armed with carbines.

PROFESSORIAL CHANGES.

A number of changes have recently occurred in the staff of the Swiss medical faculties. Prof. Guido Miescher, of Basle, has been nominated to the chair of dermatology in Zurich, vacant through the death of Prof. Bruno Bloch. Miescher has been for many years the collaborator of Bloch, and has the private mental home near Zurich, where he has been for six years. At Geneva the late Prof. Kummer has been replaced in the chair of surgery by Dr. Albert Jentzer, surgeon attached to the Hôpital Cantonal, who has done excellent work in brain surgery.

SWITZERLAND BEATING BELGIUM.

Switzerland won both singles matches in the quarter-final round of the Davis Cup (qualifying competition) against Belgium. Results: H. C. Fisher (Switzerland) beat A. Lacroix (Belgium), 6—2, 3—6, 6—2, 6—2; M. Ellmer (Switzerland) beat C. Nayaert (Belgium), 6—2, 3—6, 7—5, 7—5.

NO NEW HOTELS IN SWITZERLAND.

The law which restricts the erecting of new Hotels in Switzerland has been extended until the end of 1936.

SWISS CATHOLIC YOUTH IN CONGRESS.

For the first time the Catholic Youth of Switzerland have met in a national congress of their own. Over 20,000 young men, drawn from all parts of the country, went to the picturesque Catholic city of Zoug.

The young men were addressed in the open air, where High Mass was also celebrated, by Mgr. Ambühl, Bishop of Basle, Mgr. Scheiwiler, Bishop of St. Gall, and by other prominent leaders of Catholic thought and action, clergy and laity alike. Amongst the latter was M. Jean Musy, Swiss Minister of Finance. Loud speakers communicated every word to this vast and most impressive audience.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

Mme. Louise Strehler-Maag, the wife of a teacher at the school of the "Kaufmännischer Verein" at Zurich, was found murdered at her home at the Kreuzstrasse. The flat was left in a disorderly condition, and a money box was found broken open. The police have opened an inquiry, but so far no arrest has been made. Great indignation is felt all over the town about the terrible happening. The husband of the unfortunate victim was out of town when the tragedy occurred.

M. Heinrich Bräm, member of the National Council, has resigned; his place has been taken by M. Heinrich Emil Furrer at Zurich.

BERNE.

M. Häberlin, Federal Councillor has celebrated last Wednesday his 65th birthday. Heinrich Häberlin was born on Sept. 6th at Weinfelden, (Thurgau) and was the son of a member of the cantonal Government and National Councillor. He studied law at the Universities of Zurich, Leipzig and Berlin, and later on established himself as an advocate. For many years he was District President in Frauenfeld. In 1904 he entered Parliament, and presided in 1919 over the National Council. He was elected Federal Councillor in 1920, as successor of Federal Councillor Calonder. Twice he was President of the Swiss Confederation, namely in 1926 and 1931.

The Federal Council has granted a credit amounting to 180,000 frs. for the erection of an aeroplane shed on the Allmend in Thun.

LUCERNE.

M. Bernhard Rast and Dr. Charles Blankart, have been appointed Managers of the Cantonal Bank of Lucerne.

BASLE.

Professor Willy Rehberg, a former Professor at the Conservatory at Basle, has celebrated his seventieth birthday.

NEUCHÂTEL.

Lieutenant Zulauf was killed last Saturday, when flying over the Aerodrome of Les Eplatures. Lt. Zulauf was one of the most experienced military flyers, and his death at the early age of 28, is much regretted.

MOUNTAINEERING PERILS.

By J. F. HUNTINGTON.

A striking accident in the mountains is sure to start rolling again the ball of discussion on whether people should climb at all. Few discussions, however, are less likely to have any practical result. The right to climb will always be claimed and exercised by those who have that particular call in their blood, and for them all shedding of ink on the subject must be vain. My only purpose here is to consider whether any practical lessons for the climbing fraternity, actual or potential, may be drawn from the disaster which overtook the four Eton masters, all of them, be it remembered, thoroughly competent climbers engaged on an ascent of a mountain of not exceptional difficulty, the Piz Roseg.

The first question usually put in such cases is whether amateurs should undertake major ascents in the Alps at all without a guide. The question comes in a sense oddly in this case, seeing that on the very day of the disaster one of the greatest guides in the Alps, Franz Lochmatter, was reported to have perished with his employer in an accident on the Weisshorn. "There is no armour against fate" — not even the greatest of guides. But, obviously, there are many climbers in the Alps, as the terrible yearly toll among young foreign students sufficiently indicates, who have no business to be on the mountains without a guide, or, in some cases perhaps, at all. I have myself watched with anxiety on occasion some party of brilliant young rock climbers, trained among the English hills, crossing, guideless, glaciers and snowfields and icefalls with a fearlessness which was certainly not bred of experience and knowledge. The dangers and difficulty of rock are quickly learnt and appreciated, or not at all; those of ice and snow reveal themselves, sometimes immediately under the feet, only after a longer initiation. But these four climbers who died on the Piz Roseg, with one of whom I have climbed myself, were, as to three of them, men of long practice and experience on ice and snow, and even the reported presence of fresh snow on the mountain, while it certainly made greater caution necessary, did not, in my opinion, make the ascent of the mountain without a guide unjustifiable for them.

Is it the case then that their execution of the climb left anything to be desired? It is with great reluctance that the critic makes himself heard on these occasions, but the best interests of the sport clamorously demand that every accident should have its lessons, if there are any, clearly drawn, nothing being extenuated and naught set down in malice. It is agreed that this accident occurred while the climbers were descending a steep snow slope, in which they had not cut steps, and no doubt it was their omission to do that at this point which was, whatever the immediate cause, ultimately responsible for the accident: as to this, the statement of the fine guide who found the bodies is conclusive. No doubt, also, they would have cut steps but for the fact that they were all wearing crampons, those eight or ten-pronged steel "shoes" which fit, and must be made to fit closely, on to the climbing boots. Now there are two main dangers attaching to the use of crampons, the one physical and the other psychological. The physical danger is that the space within the prongs tends to get clogged with snow, so that the eight or ten sharp points no longer bite on the surface — and it appears, from the account of one of the guides, that the crampons of this party, when the bodies were discovered, were in this condition. The psychological danger is lest crampons may come to be regarded as an adequate substitute for step-cutting almost anywhere, even on slopes on which they are most emphatically not. The use of crampons, both for the additional speed and security which they give on ice and snow and for the difficulty which most amateurs have in cutting steps, is now fairly general, so general indeed that an old Zermatt guide once complained to me that step-cutting was becoming a lost art among the younger generation of guides. (It is fair to add that I have never seen any trace of this.) But they merely add one more climbing risk for climbers who cannot recognize instantly conditions of snow and ice in which neither crampons nor anything else are a substitute for step-cutting.

Very few English amateurs ever come to judge of snow and ice conditions with the sixth sense which even a third-rate guide seems generally to possess. But one simple rule will take anyone a