

News from Switzerland

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17th YEAR.

JANUARY, 1952.

AUCKLAND.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

The Extension of the Cultivation of Colza.

An effort is being made in Switzerland to incite consumers to appreciate more the advantage of colza as edible oil. The culture of colza has covered 1765 ha. in 1950, and 1850 ha. in 1951. Next year, thanks to the result of propaganda in favour of colza, the area will reach a total of 2750 ha.

A Swiss Invention.

The Brown Boveri Co., in Baden, have just published the results of their researches over the past years which have led to the creation of a new apparatus, the betatron. This apparatus produces extremely penetrating radiation rich in energy which can be used for several purposes. The main application fields are:—

Deep therapy;

Technical examination of materials, principally metallic pieces of considerable thickness; and

Nuclear research in atomic physics.

The first installation of betatron has been made at the Cantonal Hospital in Zurich, and is being used for cancer therapy. It is also used for research work of a biological and physical nature, as well as for the radiography of building materials.

Half of the Swiss Importations Pass Through the Fluvial Port of Bale.

Recently a convoy going up the Rhein, berthed at the Port of Bale. It brought a cargo of Canadian corn. This transport enabled the Port of Bale to register a record. Since the beginning of the year 4,000,000 tons have been imported into Switzerland, this being 500,000 tons more than last year.

A Swiss Invention for Saving Petrol.

A Swiss has just completed the invention of an economiser apparatus for saving petrol. The reduction of the consumption obtained with this invention is said to be 25 per cent. Furthermore, it increases the power of the motor in the same proportion as the petrol economy is attained. Tests made on streets have been decisive. Without this apparatus a car reaches, on the highway, a speed of 127 km. per hour, consuming 17 litres of petrol for 100 km.; with it a speed of 155 km. per hour is reached with a maximum consumption of 14 litres. This apparatus, which is moderately priced, is entirely automatic and has been constructed to fit all makes of European and American cars.

Switzerland Helps Italy.

In order to help the victims of the recent inundations in the North of Italy, the Federal Council has decided to make a donation of Sfr. 100,000. Several Cantonal and Municipal Governments have also contributed with sums of several thousand francs. The Swiss Railways and Post Offices forward, free of charge, all parcels containing gifts for Italy. Up to now many wagons with clothes, food and medicaments have left Switzerland for Italy.

Artificial Snow.

Switzerland, the skiers' paradise, will be even more noiseless in the future, as a Swiss inventor has produced artificial snow named "Glamic." This synthetic snow consists of white tiles, placed side by side and covered with a given quantity of liquid made of the same substance, which affords the gliding track a certain elasticity. The first track of this kind in Switzerland has recently been inaugurated in Geneva.

The Hindu Railways Order Carriages from Switzerland.

The Wagon and Elevator Manufacturers of Schlieren-Zurich, have just informed the Swiss Press about two prototypes of wagons, being part of an order for 50 carriages, for the Hindu Railways. The excellent wagons built about 10 years ago have induced this foreign company to adopt the same model of construction for its carriages. Quite a series of problems have arisen during the execution of this order and the climatic conditions and customs of the country had to be taken into account. The sides and the roofs of the carriages have a specially effective thermic isolation. Each compartment has fans, and the sanitary installations are numerous and spacious. The first-class carriages even have showers.

The Development of Medicine in Switzerland.

Switzerland has always paid much attention to the development of medicine. A relatively high standard of living, which promotes good hygiene, has helped in this task. The number of practising physicians in Switzerland last year was 4000; that is one doctor for approximately every 1100 persons. The number of lady doctors is 760.

The Importance of Swiss Banks.

If the Savings Banks, Private Banks and branches of foreign banks, as well as the Mutual Savings Banks are taken into account, there are more than 3700 bank offices in Switzerland. This number gives an idea of

the extension and density of Swiss banking. The figure of the total balance of the Swiss banks at the end of 1950 was 27.4 milliard francs.

Swiss Who Make Careers Abroad.

It is well known that numerous Swiss have made brilliant careers in the hotel trade abroad. The generation of today is also following this tradition. Mr. Arthur Elmiger, from Lucerne, has been nominated by the most important hotel organisation in America, as Director-General of the "Caribe Hilton" Hotel in San Juan (Porto Rico), considered as the most modern hotel in the world.

The "Gluckschette" and the Inundations in Italy.

The radio studio Lausanne has already taken many praiseworthy initiatives, as for instance, the benevolent activity of the "Gluckschette" which has met with very good response in many countries. Stirred by the damage caused in the Po Valley, Italy, through the recent inundations, the directors of Studio Lausanne, sent one of their best reporters, Mr. Zbinden, to Italy, who, accompanied by Mr. Virdis, of the technical department, brought back a touching sound wave documentary. This running commentary was broadcast by the Station of Sottens, a few minutes before the appeal by Roger Nordmann, founder of the "Gluckschette," was made in favour of the victims of the inundations in Italy, and was transmitted to stations in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Monaco, Germany, Austria and Italy. The results were really exceptional. Twenty-four hours after the appeal on Tuesday night, clothes, foodstuffs and money-orders started to flow in. The appeal was sponsored by Mr. Aleardo Pini, President of the National and State Councils, who expressed himself in a touching way in the three national languages.

A Monk From St. Bernard Was Victim of an Avalanche.

On November 19th, 1951, a group of persons from the valley of Aoste, in Italy, wanted to pass over to Switzerland in the region of the Great San Bernard. The monk, Lucien Droz, 27 years old, who worked in the Hospice of the Great San Bernard, and who was a certified guide, offered to take them over the mountain. As the weather was bad he preceded the group in order to scrutinise the grounds, and while doing so had the misfortune to be caught by an avalanche. Five hours after the accident his comrades were able to free his body. He had been dead for some time.

The Duke of Kent in Lausanne.

The young Duke of Kent, nephew of King George VI. of England, who studies in the Institute "Le Rosey" in Rolle, Canton Vaud, visited the town of Lausanne. He went there to take part in the traditional ceremony of the Anniversary of the Armistice of 1918, and of the "Day of Remembrance" for the Allied soldiers killed in the two World Wars.

Great Numbers of Foreign Workers in Switzerland.

The high industrial activity has compelled Switzerland to appeal for great numbers of foreign workers. At the beginning of the year there were 95,000 foreigners, of which 35,000 were working in industry; the others were employed as domestic help, hotel personnel and farmers. Over half of them are of Italian origin. Germany and Austria have sent 16,000 persons, France 6,000, and other countries 4,000.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

No news has been received from the members of the Swiss Colony, which is regrettable.

SWISS GYMNASTIC FESTIVAL

(By E. Merz, Auckland.)

Many of our readers will doubtless remember the impressive spectacle of the Federal gymnastic festivals held every four years, each time in a different town. Some of you may even have actively participated as "Turner," as I did myself.

Thirty thousand men and fifteen thousand women athletes congregated in Lausanne last July for this traditional occasion. Some Swiss magazines depicting a few striking pictures, revived such vivid memories, that I could see myself participating as one of the thousands of virile young men. I can again see it all as if it happened yesterday, and I feel that a short description may be of interest to some of you.

First let me say that today there are approximately 2500 separate associations with some 250,000 members. Excepting during a few winter months, all these men are intensively trained under expert leadership, and a healthy, disciplined manhood is thus created. In the spring and early summer provincial and Cantonal competitions take place all over the country in preparation of the great national festival.

High anticipation to succeed well and the mood of adventure got hold of the younger of our sizeable "Verein," as the day of departure drew nearer. We were all sure to bring home a laurel. On arrival at the capital we lined up for the long procession which was always part and parcel of the occasion. To the accompaniment of many brass bands the endless column took two hours to pass, and you all remember well the marching men in white gymnast's dress, carrying their coats and each wearing diagonally across his chest a red and white ribbon covered with silver souvenir badges of all the gymnastic festivals in which he had taken part in previous years. Some of the societies were small and modest, others numerous and proud of their impressive group. Each "Verein" is preceded by a banner-carrier, who wears a large ostrich feather on his hat, huge white gauntlets and a wide silk sash over his shoulder and across the chest. On either side of the carrier marches a handsome gymnast with a large curved horn filled with flowers slung around his neck. Some student associations, which are also gymnastic societies, look specially picturesque in their traditional costumes of white breeches, velvet jackets and black riding boots. And each of them carries a rapier. The spectators are always liberal in applause and many pretty girls watching the fine procession throw flowers.

Strenuous and serious work soon commenced at the sports arena to the delight of thousands of eager watchers. The competitions are mainly divided in three groups: The National Turner, the Kunst Turner, and the Light Athletes. The first absolve their programme in teamwork on the horizontal, the parallel bars, etc.; the second work individually as really outstanding artists and masters of precision, accuracy and bodily discipline; the third sprint, race, jump or pole vault, etc. For the onlookers it is a treat to watch the marvellous team or individual work performed. The competitions usually last three days or more, depending on the number of participants.

The high-light of the festival is the mass display, the "Freiuebungen." To see 20,000 or 30,000 perform simultaneously, is an impressive spectacle. After each association marches to the appointed spot on the great field, the music starts with a rousing march and all the banner-carriers run to the back of the field. This multitude of coloured flags flutters behind the thousands of white figures—so many that all seems as a snow-white sheet. Then the men perform a complicated set of well-drilled exercises to a march composed especially for the occasion. For about 20 minutes the white figures move in rhythm to the sound of brass bands, while the large crowd watches spellbound.