

Notes & gleanings

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NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The return to more normal conditions has strangled an industry that for a short time had all the appearance of being profitable and capable of further development; this refers to the exploitation of the coal deposits in the Canton of Valais. During the two years 1919 and 1920 about 140,000 tons of coal were raised; with the resumption of coal imports from abroad, however, the output dropped in the following year to under 11,000 tons. Based on an official report by the U.S.A. Consul at Geneva, the *Manchester Guardian Commercial* (June 22nd) supplies the following data which will be read with interest:—

"Extensive research work, backed in many instances by the Government, has been carried on in Switzerland in an endeavour to locate coal, but the country is still dependent upon imported fuel. Anthracite exists only in the Canton of Valais, where there is estimated to be a reserve of 15,000,000 tons. The quality is poor, containing a considerably percentage of foreign substances, so that it is not highly valuable for industrial purposes. An analysis of one of the best grades showed the following results: Carbon, 65.1 per cent; natural humidity, 8 per cent; sulphur, 0.2 per cent; cinder, 26.7 per cent. Such difficult conditions are encountered in the coal industry of the Valais that only a large concern covering the entire Canton could hope successfully to realise profits on its mineral deposits. A few scattered veins of soft coal have been discovered, but these have either been quickly exhausted, or their exploitation has succumbed to the pressure of outside competition.

The shutting off of imported coal by the war naturally led to intensive exploitation with improved machinery, as well as to further prospecting in the Valais region, and production was temporarily stimulated. However, with the reopening of outside sources the output decreased, and the Swiss market returned to foreign hands. At present the few mines in operation are fairly well equipped. One disadvantage that has always existed is that the necessity of frequent loading and unloading between the pits and the railroads breaks up the coal."

* * *

The attribute of "paradise" in reference to Switzerland turns up now and then in the English press. This time a correspondent in the *Westminster Gazette* (June 23rd) refers to our country as a paradise for small cars. Why a large car should be out of favour is not quite clear from the article, which, we are sure, will appeal to everyone fortunate enough in these times to own an automobile:—

"Though one may often meet a Rolls-Royce or a Napier, Switzerland is especially a paradise for the owner of the small or medium-powered car—I mean about 10-25 h.p. For the 'speed merchant' it is no place, and he had better keep away, for his own sake and for everyone's. The roads are good, wide enough, and well provided with signposts. Driving is a pure delight, or rather it would be were it not that much of the scenery must be missed owing to the number of interesting curves and turns to be negotiated.

The gradients almost everywhere are so easy that a 10-h.p. car, with four "up," can take them comfortably, if slowly. Except in the Canton of Graubünden, all safe roads are open to motorists, and tours can be mapped out, including the famous passes—Grimsel, Furka, St. Gothard, Simplon, Klausen, Brünig, Pillon des Mosses, etc.

To appreciate Switzerland's wonderful scenery properly it must be seen by running at no more than a moderate speed, say, 20 miles an hour, though even then much will be unavoidably missed. Everyone will want to include the Lakes of Geneva, Lucerne and Zurich, and the Rhinefall in his programme, as well as some of the passes mentioned above, but the Lakes of Morat, Zug, Thun, Brienz and others are quite as lovely in their different ways.

Graubünden, or Grisons, remains the 'Bluebeard's Chamber,' and, of course, it is the Canton that every motorist badly wants to run through to visit the lovely resorts of St. Moritz, Maloja, Pontresina, and Davos. The cause of this prohibition is the attitude of the peasants; certainly it is not the fault of the hotel proprietors, who have done all they possibly can to have it removed. In 1921 the road from Chiavenna (in Italy) to St. Moritz was open for a few hours daily by way of experiment, but I have not yet heard that it is to be repeated this season. It is possible, however, that Graubünden gains as much

as it loses through becoming the Mecca of the anti-motorist. Still, if the hotel-proprietors could have their way, the roads would soon be thrown open.

The speed limit on open roads is 40 km. (25 miles) per hour, though a considerably higher speed is usually tolerated if no danger to third parties is involved. Through the towns and villages 18 km. (11 miles) per hour is the rule, except where specially posted up as less.

Good garages are plentiful, and the wayside supply of petrol and oil is all that is needful. Local repairers abound, while in the chief towns there are engineering firms who can attend to anything."

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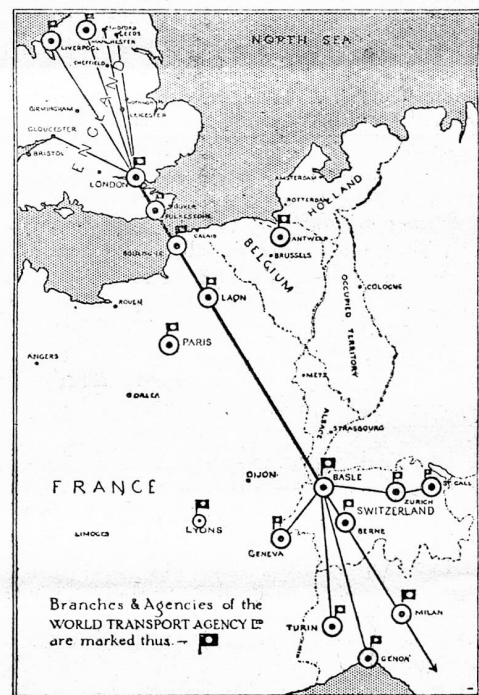
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