

Notes & gleanings

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NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The Alpine Motor Service run by the Swiss Federal Railways is described by *Motor Transport* (August 14th) in an illustrated article which emphasizes the great difference between traffic and road conditions there and those in England. The satisfactory financial result and the fact that there has not been a single accident demonstrate—the writer says—in no uncertain manner the reliability of the cars (Saurer) when working under strenuous conditions; it is only a chassis of the thoroughbred class that can stand the continuous gruelling imposed by negotiating the Alpine passes. The human factor is, of course, of tremendous importance, and in face of the many accidents on the—comparatively speaking—flat and uniform roads of this country the superior skill and sense of responsibility of the Swiss Government drivers stand out prominently.

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A humorous account of the Six Day Motor Cycle Race appears in *Motor Cycling* (Aug. 23rd) by an English competitor who intended to ride to Geneva, but, owing to lack of time, was forced to go on by train from Paris, where—

"For about 100 francs I bought a ticket for a second-class seat to Geneva. Of course, there wasn't one vacant. I paid, roughly, 50 francs extra for a first-class seat, and there wasn't one of those either. So a gorgeous individual popped me into a sleeper and touched me for a further 75 francs. Thought I to myself, 'This is very comfortable, but I shall shortly be writing, 'Dear Firm, please wire cash.'"

However, I reached Geneva; my mount didn't. I wired various people, and I worried various people—or rather, I paid an interpreter to wire and worry for me. Eventually I discovered that it was languishing in the Customs House of the frontier station 30 miles away. I trained off to the frontier station, presented my *Carnet de Passage en Douane* (or thereabouts), had the slip torn off and the counterfoil stamped, and was allowed to pass out of the Customs and thus out of France.

But the trouble was I wasn't out of France. My papers said I wasn't in France, but they didn't say where I was, and half a mile down the road, the actual frontier Customs official became suspicious. Moreover, he became excited and voluble and bristly, and he performed Swedish drill exercises with his arms and shoulders. So did I, with sundry allusions to "la gare sanguinaire"—which didn't seem to help him. "XYZ..." said he for twenty minutes.

Then he started making notes. He acquired my volumes of papers and made notes from all of them. Meanwhile, I sat on his table and jerked it. Also I smoked Gold Flakes, carefully dropping the ash into his inkpot—when he wasn't looking—which somewhat impaired the legibility of his notes. Then he let me go. I rode through the neutral zone, disbursed money at the Swiss frontier and obtained in exchange various bits of paper and a nice little book on how to ride a motor-cycle in Switzerland.

This was a most instructive little book, printed in both French and English, and from it I learned many things. One is that the Swiss motor-cyclist must be a harassed individual. He must never exceed 25 m.p.h. At night, or in foggy weather, or on meeting other vehicles, he must slow down to 15 m.p.h. On mountain roads the limit is 11 m.p.h., and on corners $3\frac{3}{4}$ m.p.h. On his machine must be fitted a high-toned horn, and nothing but it. In about half the country it is not allowed to ride at all. In some parts Sunday riding is totally prohibited, and in others everyone must be off the roads by 8 p.m. In some he may ride in the morning, but not in the afternoon, and in others in the afternoon, but not in the morning. Oh, what a happy land!—is England!

They had, of course, no time to admire the magnificent scenery, but evidently made up for this in other ways:—

"We were all invited to 'Wine of Honour' before the trial, on the day of rest at Lugano, and at the finish. And at many of the checks—together there were 76—we were given tea, coffee, beer or wine, several of them even supplying champagne. (A.-C.U., please note.)

We won the cup on riding and lost it on technicalities. From this we have learned several things, which I will enume-

rate. First, we want accurate road cards. To get these an A.-C.U. representative should go completely round the course some days before the event, with two—or more—good speedometers, and check off each stage. Inaccuracies need not be altered, so long as the British riders know the snags. (Most of the men living in the country probably know them from experience.) Secondly, we want clearer rules. Bennett had a broken saddle spring, which lost England the cup. We could find nothing in the rules to say that a saddle must not be changed, but were afraid to do it, lest he became disqualified altogether. Thirdly, we want, on the 'Grand Jury,' an exactly equal number of representatives for each country competing. This year Swiss, Swedish and British teams competed. So far as I can ascertain the Grand Jury was composed of five Swiss, two Englishmen, and no Swedes at all.

I cannot finish with a sting in the tail. Switzerland put up a fine performance, and has now won the cup for the third year in succession. Hence, I believe it passes to them for good. But should another cup be put up for next year, I hope to see a British team competing—a team which, with adequate assistance for the technicalities as outlined above, will, I feel sure, be successful. Personally, I enjoyed the trip enormously, with all the early rises and the hard work. We were very kindly treated, and we all of us returned loaded with cups, gold watches and the like. With the other riders we got on splendidly, and most of us have a number of foreign names and addresses in our notebooks. And those who visited the 'Café des Sportsmen,' at Geneva, can testify further to the hospitality of the Swiss competitors."

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A refreshing breath of confidence runs through an article in the *Manchester Guardian Commercial* (Aug. 24th) which reviews the Swiss unemployment figures and the volume of trade with this country to End of June, 1922, as compared with previous periods:—

"The fact would seem to be that Switzerland has lived through its period of panic and is settling down to mend matters by enterprise and work. Nobody pretends now that Restriction of Imports will save the situation, and the import prohibitions will probably be abolished in a few months' time. Opinion is divided as to this kind of legislation. No doubt it had its uses in the case of outstanding instances of dumping, but many business men feel that any artificial interference with the economic life of a nation does more harm than good. The fear of German competition has largely passed away. At the present time Switzerland could, if necessary, compete in Germany's own home market with such things as light cotton piece goods and ladies' blouses and Swiss woollen clothes. This is because Germany's home prices tend to rise more quickly than the fall in currency."

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The French branch of the Oerlikon Company has received, in connection with the electrification of the Paris-Orleans line, an order for 80 electric locomotives of 1,720 h.p. each. The first five of these engines will be constructed at Oerlikon to serve as models for the bulk, which will be built at the factory of the French branch in Ornans.

HERE AND THERE.

By J. H. Cortesey.

Sir Harry Lauder sometimes begins his "turn" by standing in the centre of the stage and laughing uproariously. The audience invariably joins him in his speechless merriment. This puts his hearers in the fit frame of mind to enjoy the humour which follows. They get "tuned-up."

The saying "laugh and grow fat" shows that laughter possesses tonic qualities and helps digestion. Really, a hearty laugh must have a robust good nature behind it, while the giggle and snigger can but proceed from an empty mind.

"How much lies in laughter!" exclaims Carlyle. There must be a true ring in it, for laughter is responsible