

Notes & gleanings

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NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The Travel Editor of *The Queen* (March 11th) states that the variety of climates in Alpine regions makes Switzerland a country to be visited at any season, provided the visitor carefully studies the questions of altitude and aspect. The principal spring resorts are then fully dealt with, and the attractions of these places are set out from climatic, scenic, historical and literary points of view.

* * *

An instructive article on "An Eskimo Snow House" appears in *The Field* (March 4th). The writer, together with another Englishman, has built on the Gerschni Alp at Engelberg one of those "castles"—the occupation of every schoolboy after a copious snowfall—and confidently believes that his is the first Eskimo snow house ever built south of the Arctic Circle. His minute description of its architecture will, no doubt, prove most welcome to the many unsuccessful house and flat hunters in this country who may now be tempted to erect in the eternal snow their own habitation, which at present is free from the attentions of the collector of rates and taxes.

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The *British Medical Journal* (March 11th) publishes tables with reference to the open-air treatment of tuberculosis, showing the average results of observations made by well-known British medical specialists at Montana and neighbouring stations; it is stated that the sunshine and calm, frosty air of the Alpine winter make the management of open-air treatment comparatively easy, and its effect on the feelings of the patients hastens their response.

* * *

Another less complimentary reference is contained in the last number of the *Anti-Vivisection Journal*, which says that very little has been heard of late of the Spahlinger Treatment, probably explained by the fact that "every remedy is at first a success in the hands of its inventor or discoverer."

* * *

The *Manchester Guardian Commercial* (March 9th) refers to the probable abolition of the Swiss State monopoly in copper vitriol, which is used for the spraying of the vines. Considerable quantities will be required, and there should be a good opening for British suppliers.—The Rhine Navigation problem receives further consideration by ventilating the emphatic protest registered by the British Chamber of Commerce for Switzerland, and the unconcerned attitude of the British Foreign Office is severely criticized.

* * *

A most interesting article on the question of Labour and Wages in Switzerland is published in the *Birmingham Post* (March 10th); it gives a comprehensive picture of the present position in its relation to other countries:—

"The question of, at any rate, a temporary modification of the eight-hour working day or 48-hour working week, which was first raised by the employers of labour, is now being discussed by the employees. In many factories the 52-hour working week has been reintroduced in Switzerland, and the result in at least one case has been a 10 per cent. increase in production and about a 12 per cent. decrease in the cost of production. Switzerland, I may say, is the country where probably the 48-hour working week has been most rigorously enforced, one reason being that so many of her workers are civil servants or State railway workers. A change in the hours of work cannot be introduced by a mere agreement between employers and employed, but must first be sanctioned by the Government. If a firm desiring to introduce longer hours of work can prove that it can conform to certain conditions or is in certain circumstances defined in the Swiss Factory Law, then the Government grants its permission to reintroduce the 52-hour working week—that is to say, if the workers will consent thereto. At present

in a number of different factories a referendum among the workers is taking place concerning the question of the 52-hour working week. In many cases the workers are confronted with the following alternative: Reduced wages and a 48-hour working week, or present wages and a 52-hour working week; and sometimes the voting has given a very heavy majority in favour of non-reduction of wages and longer working hours.

What is amusing is the attitude of the extreme Socialist Press towards the proposed increases of the hours of work. While on the one hand it thunders against the Washington Eight-hour Working Day Convention and the Versailles Treaty, on the other hand it appeals to the International Labour Office—an institution on which otherwise it loses no opportunity of heaping contempt, and which Socialists refuse to recognise—to enforce the Washington Convention. What is also strange is that, although the eight-hour day Convention was passed in Washington two years ago, yet in America the hours of work are very elastic, and depend, I believe, upon State legislation.

In Germany, which was represented at Washington, the eight-hour working day is enforced in such a way as to make it practically inoperative. On the railways, for instance, it is interpreted as eight hours of actual work, not of being on duty, and it never includes the time spent going to and from the place of work, nor pauses of any kind, nor meal times. In Switzerland the eight-hour day came into force in 1919, and it has been calculated that the result of the first year's working of the Act was a loss of a thousand million francs to the country, which is alarming for a population of only 3,880,000. In France nine and ten hours are worked in many factories, and the workers apparently raise no serious opposition to this. Indeed, they often ask to work overtime, which is usually paid at a higher rate. It is only on the railways, and then chiefly on the State lines, that the eight-hour day is enforced, and here it has necessitated the employment of about 100,000 more workers than formerly; and, as we know, the French railways are in a very weak financial condition, their deficit sometimes running into many millions. In Holland the 48-hour working week prevails in principle, but many exceptions are allowed, and there are clauses in the factory laws permitting an employer to keep his workers additional hours at work without asking legal permission to do so. In Hungary it can be freely prolonged, according to the requirements of any particular industry. In Belgium the law concerning the hours of labour is not very strictly enforced, and can be wholly suspended if the country's general situation should seem to require such a measure. In fact, according to the information available at the International Labour Office in Geneva, the longest weekly working hours are in the United States, where in some occupations, it is asserted, as much as 72 hours per week are worked.

There can be little doubt that the strict enforcement of the eight-hour day has added to Switzerland's difficulties during the present prolonged crisis. Thus the Swiss Master Joiners and Carpenters' Association recently asked the Government to allow them to increase the working week by 4 hours. The carpentering trade, they urged, is specially subject to speculation and to the influences of the exchange. Wages and the chief materials necessary were quite recently as much as 100 to 130 per cent. above 1913 rates, and prices could not be reduced. To cover the expenses of their works and employ their workmen, some master joiners have been supplying goods in considerable quantities at cost price; and 'this desperate state of things,' they declare, 'can be remedied only with the help of the workers, by the latter consenting to a 52-hour working week.' The Swiss Co-operative Societies have also increased their workers' hours lately, for otherwise they would have been obliged to engage a larger staff, and thus increase the cost of necessities.

It is not, however, merely those whom the Socialists stigmatise as 'capitalists' who are saying openly that they cannot manage to run their works and factories at a profit with the present wages and hours of work; municipalities in which Socialists are in a majority are finding out the same thing, and the only Communist municipality, ruled by Communists, in Switzerland (that at Neuhausen) began to put its household finance in order by a 10 per cent. reduction not merely of all its workers' wages, but also of the salaries of all its teachers."

It will be remembered that the partial extension of the 48-hour working week is strongly opposed by the International Trade Union in Amsterdam and by a number of self-constituted foreign labour councils and committees, which have gone so far as to declare a boycott on certain goods of Swiss origin.

A remarkable piece of news has been running through the English papers these last few days and purports to be based on the following press telegram from "Annemasse—Switzerland":—

"As a result of the ever-growing lack of business in the Swiss watch and clock trade several large works have already entirely transformed their machinery.

One important works at La Chaux-de-Fonds has decided to take up the manufacture of locomotives, and has produced a model which appears to be very satisfactory.

It is understood that this works is prepared to manufacture locomotives for Soviet Russia."

If the Swiss watch manufacturers are as successful in selling their new product as they have been with watches we suppose that everybody before long will possess a locomotive of his own.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SWISS LEGATION

Il arrive souvent que des voyageurs, se rendant en Suisse, désirent emporter avec eux, pour leur usage personnel pendant leur villégiature, quelques paquets de thé, de la laine à tricoter, quelques mètres de tissus pour vêtements à confectionner, ainsi que du tabac, des cigars ou des cigarettes.

A l'effet de renseigner à ce sujet le public voyageur, nous avons l'honneur de donner aux lecteurs du "Swiss Observer," les indications suivantes, dérivant d'une communication de la Direction Générale des Douanes, du 27 février 1922:

En règle générale, toute quantité de marchandise dépassant 100 grammes est passible de droits, et le thé ne fait pas exception.

Un tricotage commencé avec la petite quantité de laine nécessaire pour le finir serait encore admis en franchise, mais on ne laisserait pas passer en franchise une quantité de laine excédant 100 grammes.

Il ne saurait être question d'importer en franchise des étoffes pour en confectionner des vêtements; on admettrait cependant un seul coupon pourvu qu'il ne dépasse pas 50 centimètres de longueur sur toute la largeur du tissu.

Les voyageurs qui viennent en Suisse peuvent importer 100 grammes de tabac à fumer, ou 20 cigares, ou 100 cigarettes.

Telle est la règle, mais les touristes qui viennent en Suisse sont traités avec égard et l'on passe sur les excédents insignifiants quand la limite se trouve quelque peu dépassée.

Quant aux droits d'entrée dont seraient passibles les marchandises excédant les limites de l'admission en franchise, ils sont actuellement: pour le thé en récipients ne pesant pas 5 kgs contenant et contenu, 75 centimes par kilogramme; les fils de laine paient suivant le degré de fabrication de 10 à 50 centimes le kilogramme et 90 centimes par kilog s'ils sont en pelottes, bobines ou écheveaux ne pesant que 50 grammes ou moins.

Pour les tissus, les droits diffèrent beaucoup suivant la matière dont ils sont faits et le mode de fabrication; pour le coton il faut compter de 60 centimes à frs. 2.— par kilog, pour les tissus de lin 30 centimes à frs. 2.10; les tissus de soie paient 3 frs. le kilogramme et ceux de laine 60 centimes à frs. 2.50 par kilog.

D'autre part, la Direction Générale des Douanes a recommandé à son personnel, à plusieurs reprises, d'user des plus grands ménagements dans ses rapports avec les voyageurs étrangers qui viennent en Suisse comme touristes ou pour un court séjour.

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THE WAR AND SWISS ABROAD.

According to a recent report published by the Relief Committee for Assisting Swiss in Belligerent Countries an amount of 2,243,000 frs. has been collected. In the years 1915 to 1921 the following sums have been paid to suffering Swiss living in—

France	...	...	...	Frs. 1,009,339.75
Germany	...	...	...	„ 432,567.05
Austria-Hungary	...	...	...	„ 122,792.26
Belgium	...	...	...	„ 98,600.—
Russia, Finland, etc.	...	...	...	„ 36,374.—
Balkan States	...	...	...	„ 31,362.20
Poland	...	...	...	„ 27,456.50
Italy	...	...	...	„ 25,231.30
Africa	...	...	...	„ 18,400.45
England	...	...	...	„ 6,940.95

The balance left in hand of about 15,000 frs. has now been handed over to the Society "Pro Juventute."