

Home news

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HOME NEWS

Efforts are being made to bring about a change in the vexatious customs régime along the Geneva zones frontier, which, it is maintained, is chiefly responsible for the unsatisfactory economic and financial position of the canton. It is stated that since the arbitrary procedure of France in the zones controversy, Switzerland has sacrificed several million francs in customs receipts. The understanding arrived at between the two countries in 1924 by which the zones controversy—i.e., the interpretation of Art. 435 of the Versailles Treaty—is referred for adjudication to the Hague tribunal, has not yet been ratified by the French Parliament.

During the seven years to the end of 1925 nearly 2½ million francs have been disbursed by the Federal Council to support the many Russian refugees who since 1918 have settled down in Switzerland. The original daily allocation of five francs per head has now been reduced to four francs as from the 1st of this month. The relief is being administered through the organisation of the Swiss Red Cross Society; a number of these necessitous Russians are being cared for in sanatoria for pulmonary diseases.

In the second ballot last Sunday, States Councillor Laely (Liberal) has been re-elected as one of the representatives of the Grisons in the Federal States Council, thus defeating the candidate of the Democrats (Michel).

The Basle Grosse Rat has approved a scheme under which the canton will increase its present interest in the local aviation undertaking by Frs. 325,000.

The next Landsgemeinde of Appenzell A.Rh. will be asked to approve of an entertainment tax which the cantonal council wishes to impose.

Though the accounts of the municipal tramways of Lucerne have, since the beginning, returned considerable annual deficits, an amount of over Frs. 800,000 is to be spent on duplicating certain sections of the track and other improvements.

Thanks to acceleration in the electrification work the sector Basle Zurich is expected to be ready in October this year; it is hoped that the present journey of nearly 1½ hours will then be reduced to about 70 minutes.

The last of the La Chaux-le-Fonds school affair has not been heard of yet. The Conseil d'Etat of Neuchâtel, at a special sitting, has refused to sanction the appointment of Dr. Cérésolle on the ground that, although he was in possession of a doctor's certificate of philosophy from the Federal Polytechnic at Zurich, he did not seem to be qualified to lecture on, and teach, history.

For hunting a fox the Glaris courts have sentenced a poacher to 14 days' imprisonment and a fine of Frs. 400, and have deprived him of the right of hunting for the next ten years.

In an endeavour to board a moving train, M. Bühler, a St. Gall tram conductor, lost his footing and, falling under the wheels, was killed on the spot. The accident happened at Wil and was witnessed by his son, whom the father had been visiting.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By A. E. D.

Swiss Misses who will be Missed.

In these days of reviving international rivalries and intrigues it is refreshing to find that the simple good nature of the common people has lost none of its charm and old-world kindness, as the following from the *Daily Chronicle* (18th March) will show. Incidentally it proves—as I have always contended—that there is a certain affinity between Scot and Swiss; but read what the paper in question has to say about it:—

"I miss my Swiss" is what Dunfermline will be singing, in the words of the popular fox-

trot, when the Swiss misses who were recently added to the population of the Fifeshire manufacturing town take their departure. That happily will not be for a long time yet.

These Swiss misses came to Fifeshire recently in connection with the setting-up of Scotland's first artificial silk factory. The new industry has been started in a Dunfermline factory which was formerly utilised for the manufacture of linen, for which Dunfermline is world-renowned.

The proprietors of the artificial silk factory are a Swiss firm, and they have brought over a number of the female hands employed in their establishment in Switzerland, for the purpose of initiating the Scottish girls into the intricacies of weaving the new textile fabric.

The Swiss girls have made themselves very much at home in their new quarters and have been assisted to do so by the characteristic Scottish hospitality extended to them by the people of Dunfermline.

The suggestion got about recently that the Swiss girls were not quite happy in Dunfermline, but this rumour, on enquiry being made of them, they have indignantly refuted.

Their Scottish pupils have also been at pains to make it clear that their relations with their Swiss tutors are of the very friendliest.

It is just possible that when their duties at Dunfermline are concluded, not all the Swiss misses will make the return journey back to Switzerland for good. Some of them may by that time have become the wives of Scottish husbands, or at least have given their promise to settle down in Scotland.

Now, isn't this something which warms our hearts and makes us feel that, if only the peoples were brought into closer contact with one another, much ill-founded prejudice and artificially fostered dislikes would disappear and make way for that broader human understanding which all men of good will are so earnestly striving for?

Artificial Silk Factories in Switzerland.

As I was just referring to artificial silk, the following article from *The Times* of 9th March may interest my readers:—

The artificial silk industry is comparatively new in Switzerland, where it was introduced in 1906 by the "Société de la Viscose Suisse." It has, however, so developed during the past three years as to become one of the most important of Swiss industries. Exports now reach a value of nearly 20,000,000 frs., and the industry, in which some 22,000,000 frs. are invested, is now employing about 5,200 workers. The industry is concentrated in Eastern Switzerland, where cheap and abundant electrical power and skilled labour are available, in the cantons where the silk embroidery and textile industry settled some centuries ago, between Zurich and the Lake of Constance. There are now five factories producing artificial silk: one at Emmenbrücke (Canton Lucerne); one at Steckhorn, on the Lake of Constance; one at Rheinfelden (Canton Aargau); another at Rorschach (Canton St. Gallen); and a fifth has just been completed at Heerbrugg-Widnau, in the valley of the Rhine. The construction of a sixth in the same region is contemplated.

The first concern to manufacture artificial silk in Switzerland was the "Société de la Viscose Suisse, S.A.", a limited company created by French capitalists with the collaboration of Swiss experts. In 1921 this company sold its Emmenbrücke factory, created in 1906, to a Swiss undertaking, in which the French group has retained an interest. This undertaking has a capital of 10,000,000 frs., and its two factories—Emmenbrücke and Heerbrugg-Widnau—are using the viscose process. They employ about 4,000 people and produce a daily average of 8,000 to 10,000 kilograms of unbleached and dyed artificial silk, as well as of artificial straw and hair.

The "Borvisk Kunstseiden-Werk, A.G.," whose seat is at Zurich, was formed in 1923. To this company belong the factory of the "Borvis française" at Nevers, and that of the German "Borvisk Kunstseiden-A.G., Ltd." at Herzberg, in the Harz. This undertaking has a capital of 10,250,000 frs. It is using the viscose process, slightly modified. Production began in April, 1925, in its Steckborn factory, which is employing nearly 650 hands and is daily producing about 1,000 kilograms of artificial silk for warp and weft and finest knit goods, laces, and embroideries, either bleached or in colours. Arrangements have recently been made for doubling the production within a short time.

longs to the "Soie de Châtillon," in the Aosta valley, has a capital of 1,000,000 frs. Its Rheinfelden factory employs 400 workers, and it is using the viscose process. It was created last year, and is only now beginning to produce small quantities of yarn. The "Feldmühle Rorschach A.G.," established in 1925 by an important Swiss embroidery factory, employs about 250 workers at its Rorschach factory, which has recently begun to produce artificial silk by the modified viscose process for the embroidery and knitting industry.

The Swiss production of artificial silk totalled about 1,400 quintals (quintal=100 kilos) in 1906, and it now reaches 28,000 quintals. The exports rose from 1,250 qt., worth 3,161,900 frs., in 1906 to 8,198 qt., worth 18,061,700 frs., in 1922; 6,279 qt., worth 12,828,000 frs., in 1923; 10,574 qt., worth 19,229,000 frs., in 1924; and 14,633 qt., worth 25,322,000 frs., from January to October, 1925.

On the other hand, Switzerland imported 131 qt., worth 259,100 frs., in 1906; 8,865 qt., worth 16,472,600 frs., in 1922; 9,561 qt., worth 18,222,000 frs., in 1923; 14,588 qt., worth 26,992,000 frs., in 1924; and 10,615 qt., worth 18,888,016 frs., in 1925 (January-October). A large proportion of these imports is being re-exported in the form of ribbons and knitted goods.

As to the future, much depends on the Customs tariffs of foreign countries, the condition of exchanges, and the influence of fashion. Nevertheless, the industry has made good progress, and there is every prospect that its growth will be rapid, as it has already passed successfully through several serious economic crises.

Dr. Spahlinger's Fight with Adversity.

On the 23rd February the *Daily Mail*, in an article which was reproduced in the *S.O.* of the 6th March, reported some rather alarming experiences which had befallen our distinguished countryman, and as I know with what interest we Swiss in particular and the world in general are following his endeavours to rid humanity of one of its most deadly scourges, it may not be amiss to make my readers acquainted with the grave difficulties—principally of a material character—which hinder Dr. Spahlinger's labours. This is what one of his confrères in the medical profession has to say about them in the *Irish News* of the 3rd March:—

"Has Spahlinger solved the problem of tuberculosis?" was the subject of an interesting lecture delivered in the Y.M.C.A. Minor Hall by Dr. Andrew Trimble, chief tuberculosis officer of Belfast.

Dr. Trimble said the title of the lecture provoked a query that was not capable of a simple answer. Even if Spahlinger had produced an effective serum and vaccine, the problem of tuberculosis as a world menace would remain until the last patient had been cured, and until the conditions of life were such that new cases of tuberculosis were as rare as cases of typhus fever or cholera. The magnitude of the problem to be dealt with might be realised when it was remembered that 50,000 persons died annually of tuberculosis in the United Kingdom alone, and it had been calculated that at least ten persons were suffering from tuberculosis for every one that died of the disease. Thus, the national problem in the United Kingdom alone was the cure of 500,000 persons, and the advent of an ideal social condition in which unemployment and short time would be reduced to a minimum; in which adequate housing accommodation would be available for every citizen; and in which the education of the people would include a knowledge of simple hygiene, and an appreciation of the symptoms of the earliest departure from health in the individual. Spahlinger claimed that this was exactly the problem which he had set himself to solve, rather than mere treatment of individual patients. This desirable end was worthy of all commendation but certain difficulties stood in the way. Presuming that Spahlinger had elaborated an effective serum, it still required to be produced on a national scale, not only for Great Britain, but for all other countries; for if the problem were successfully tackled in one country only, tuberculosis would soon spread again from surrounding countries where the problem had not been faced. Unfortunately, financial difficulties had dogged the steps of Spahlinger from the beginning, until now he found all his energies absorbed in meeting his many monetary obligations. These difficulties not only prevented