

Notes and gleanings

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Perhaps it is the thundery weather which makes me somewhat garrulous. I am certainly

not amusing and see no earthly chance yet of getting in front of "Ck." I have the inferiority complex to-day and wish someone else would write this article.

If only "Ck's" poetry had not been quite so good, I might find courage to go one better and let lose some of my own rhymes, as for instance:

*Writing for the Swiss Observer is a task,
Sitting in the sun on Sunday with a flask,
Both are occupations, both are nice to do,
One makes you feel thirsty,
the other ditto, too!*

How's that?

Of course, with a bit of training and effort I could do very much better. I can do lyrical things quite easily, provided I have got the right atmosphere. Of course, the thing in poetry is to find "le mot juste," i.e. the very word which will illuminate the whole passage, which will put the reader in the "picture" as it were, at a glance and make him see exactly the shade of thought the poet wishes him to see. Now that requires long study and thought, plenty of wet towels around the poet's fevered brow and deep inspiration—gulps and gulps of it.

We then get something like this:

*Fifful the rays of the moon were shining
Over the churchyard a dog was whining,
Be quiet, my child, your mother is near,
Your father is outside, quaking with fear!*

and so on. You picture the poor wee bairn, sitting in its mother's lap—that's why she is so near! and you picture the father, just returning from the local club at the Pig and Whistle and afraid to go home in the dark, while all the time musique macabre is being rendered by the doggie without!

Next week, if necessary, more and perhaps better!

SWITZERLAND AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM.

The countries of the world are for the most part suffering to a great degree from unemployment, a consequence of the crisis which has been prevailing for over a year now. The situation of the Labour Market has in truth become nearly desperate, filling certain Governments with the gravest concern. This state of affairs is almost general, that is to say that it also extends to those countries, such as France and the United States of America, which, by reason of the relative prosperity they have enjoyed during the past few years, considered themselves as unlikely to be threatened with such a danger as this. In other states, such as England and Germany, where unemployment has been rife ever since the first years after the war, the number of unemployed has steadily increased during the last few years until at the present time the figures are really alarming.

It is evidently very difficult to realise the gravity of the situation in various countries and to put forward even approximate figures. As a matter of fact, the numbers of unemployed registered officially or noted by various organisations do not necessarily include all those who can no longer earn their living in each country. Several countries, such as the United States of America, have for a great many years taken no steps to give assistance to the unemployed from the public purse, but have left it to individuals to come to the aid of those who have found themselves temporarily out of work. However, here are some figures which will give an idea of the gravity of the situation; they are taken from well authenticated sources.

An enquiry which extended to practically all countries, estimates at 40 or 50 millions the unemployed all over the world who receive assistance from the public money or are in some way or other a burden supported by the various states. Here are the figures which concern some of the principal countries. In the United States of America, as far as can be ascertained, the number of unemployed amounts to 5 million, or nearly 10 million according to another estimate. Belgium has 100,000 out-of-work, Australia 175,000, Denmark 44,000, Germany 4.5 million, Italy 530,000, Great Britain 2.5 million, Austria 330,000, Sweden 45,000, Czechoslovakia 150,000, and France 32,000. This last figure is insignificant if one compares it to that of the population of the country.

The causes of unemployment and its remedies have for a long time occupied not only the public authorities but also the different organisations which interest themselves more specially in economic problems and social politics. The International Labour Bureau is also interesting itself in the question. One of its special Commissions is studying the problem, which was the subject, at the beginning of the year, of a report presented to the Administrative Council of this International Bureau.

Unemployment is itself the manifestation of another primary cause, the consequence of the economic crisis, of which the cause are rather difficult to define with accuracy. They might be

financial or the results of overproduction. In recent years production has, in fact, largely exceeded consumption. At all times unemployment has existed to a more or less considerable degree. It has greatly increased with the growing industrialisation of the various countries, the ever-increasing extension of production and the ever-growing difficulties encountered in adapting it to the needs of mankind.

Therefore, among the suggested remedies, it has been proposed to institute a policy of international collaboration in the domain of production, as well as different systems, which, if not capable of doing away with the causes of unemployment, will at least minimise certain of its consequences from a social point of view. Unhappily the numerous misunderstandings which still exist between the various States, if only on the matter of Customs Tariffs, form a great obstacle to the realisation of any such scheme of co-operation.

The figures we have given above show us the gravity of the situation of the Labour Market in many countries, but in some of them it has become really appalling. It is no exaggeration to state that certain countries will not escape deep-seated disorders if they do not succeed in diminishing the numbers of members of their army of "out-of-works."

In this connection, Switzerland has so far been relatively privileged. This winter the number of unemployed has not even reached 28,000, which, for a population of 4 million inhabitants, is not a crushing figure. It is true that the economic crisis made itself felt comparatively late in our country, but it would be rash to pretend that it has already reached its maximum. The situation of our Labour Market was considerably worse about 1922, when the number of unemployed exceeded 100,000, for the assistance of whom considerable sums of money were swallowed up, not to speak of the cost of "unemployed works" undertaken to help national industries as well as to remove from the system of pure "relief" the demoralising effects which it engenders.

At the end of March, the numbers of demands for employment were slightly below 20,000, while those of offers of work were a little over 4,700. It is to be noted that, if the situation is sensibly worse than in the month of March 1929 and 1930, it has improved since December in almost all branches of production and trade. The watch-makers' and jewellers' trade is still very hard hit. This branch is the only one which shows a fresh outbreak of unemployment.

Finally, in the various countries collectively at the end of March 1931, 15.2% of the earners were seeking employment. This proportion was 20.5% at the end of the previous month and 7.7% at the end of March 1930.

The preceding figures show that the question must continue to occupy the attention of our Public Authorities, but that the situation is not yet alarming, except perhaps in certain branches of production. The causes of this relatively favourable position occupied by Switzerland are doubtless to be found in the variety of her industries. Districts which produce only one article are rare, so that a compensating balance is able to be maintained. Furthermore, the comparatively extended development of agriculture and agricultural produce also helps to explain why Switzerland has suffered from unemployment less than those countries which are more industrialised and which confine their industry to the production of certain types of article.

Swiss Industry and Trade.

M. M.

GRUYERE AND ITS CHEESE.

Everyone, at any rate in the grocery trade, is familiar with the name of Gruyère, "where the cheese comes from," just as everyone knows Cheddar first of all as "the place the cheese comes from," and only secondarily as a quiet little village with a fine gorge and some wonderful caves. But, of course, we all know where most of the "Cheddar" cheese comes from; and perhaps we think we know where the "Gruyère" cheese comes from. Well, my advice, to anyone who can, is to go and see for himself.

What a fascination there is about a walled town standing as Gruyère does, on the crest of a hill commanding luscious valleys!

There is much that is interesting in the ancient castle of the quondam counts of Gruyère; and the church, big for the population, is a satisfying, quiet place to be in—delightfully fresh and right in colour and proportion. British visitors will appreciate the excellent tea shop near the fountain; it has a secluded little terrace at the back looking towards the Jura mountains.

Where is the Cheese?

But as for Gruyère cheese, unless you make special inquiries it is very doubtful if you will see or hear anything at all about it in Gruyère. And if you do make a special effort, the most you

are at all likely to see is a place for storing it. You could, no doubt, buy it there just as you could at Golders Green or Goshall, but you are more likely to buy lace or embroidery from the little girl or her granny who sit working it in the street. If you go to Gruyère to see cheese made, as you may go to Poole to see Poole pottery made you will be disappointed.

One day when I had gone out walking from Château d'Oex, a violent storm drove me for shelter into a mountain chalet such as is used to house cattle in summer, with rough sleeping and living quarters for their attendants. It was quite fifteen miles from Gruyère at the eastern end of the Château d'Oex valley.

A Typical Chalet.

Two men sat at a bench drinking a dark brown liquor from a common brown earthenware jug. The younger, who was the "patron" or boss, scooped mouthfuls of thick cream from a can of it. A wood fire burned on the stone floor under the vastest chimney I ever saw, built, as the chalet was, almost entirely of wood. Swung away from the fire on a wooden davit was what to me was the glory of the place—a huge cauldron, its lovely bellying exterior blackened with wood smoke, its interior the rich red of clean, unpolished copper. A stiff yellow liquor, about six inches deep, was stewing therein.

The "Patron" would not talk of cheese, though he talked amiably of other things. Had I ever seen such a chimney before? Did they build such chimneys in England? How excellent it was for smoking bacon.

What is a French Pint?

The other man, the "domestique," presently fetched a bottle of English essence of rennet, asking me to translate "one tea-spoonful to a pint" into French measure. My translation, made after some profound mental arithmetic, seemed to satisfy them; and, when the storm had abated sufficiently to allow me to continue my walk, we parted the best of friends.

The secrets vital to the making of Gruyère cheese are no doubt jealously guarded; but I had at any rate been able to enjoy something of the romance and interest of the conditions under which it is made, for what I saw in that chalet was typical of what is going on in hundreds of similar chalets in the most wild and hardly accessible places on the mountain sides in an extensive district round about the quiet little village from which the famous cheese derives now little more than its name.

Grocery, June Number.

SWISS EMBROIDERY INDUSTRY.

"SCRAPPING" SUPERFLUOUS PLANT.

The situation in the Swiss embroidery industry continues to give rise to much anxiety. According to the annual report of the Fiduciary Society of the Embroidery Industry in St. Gall, 1930 was unfavourable in practically every branch of the industry. Exports declined to a level lower than had been anticipated by the most pessimistic of observers, and showed a decrease of 23,500,000fr. in value and 740 tons in quantity as compared with 1929 (1,830 tons and 69,000,000fr. as against 2,570 tons and 92,000,000fr.).

Since 1920, when depression set in, no less a sum than 80,000,000fr. has been written off as a result of the financial reorganization of the industry, and another 40,000,000fr. has been lost owing to firms going into liquidation.

The loss of trade sustained during 1930 is ascribed to a great extent to the increase in duties in the United States and in several European countries, and also to the boycott of European goods in India.

During the year, out of the 2,100 shuttle and 2,900 hand-embroidery machines, approximately 50 per cent. remained idle. In consequence, however, of the revival in the use of *broderie anglaise* for summer frocks, and to the present fashion for embroidered collars and cuffs for ladies, it is hoped that there may be a slight improvement in the situation. Moreover, there is a brisk demand for embroidered handkerchiefs.

The systematic destruction of superfluous machinery has been carried out with the help of special subsidies from the Federal Council and States Councils. In 1930 there were destroyed 350 shuttle and 326 hand-embroidery machines, for which 606,722fr. was paid out in compensation to the 446 firms concerned.

At a recent meeting of the Association of Swiss Shuttle Embroidery Manufacturers, at St. Gall, a resolution was passed to the effect that a provisional regulation of minimum stitch prices should be carried out by the association. Should this decision not find favour in the eyes of the Embroidery Exporters' Union, the Federal authorities will be invited to fix the prices and enforce their application throughout the Swiss embroidery industry in order to stem the *traffic de perfectionnement* with the Vorarlberg.

T.