

Notes and gleanings [to be continued]

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elements, which thus provide a certain compensation; while in other countries, where production is less varied, the consequences of the crisis are more serious.

At the end of May, 14,365 demands for unemployment were registered, against 27,316 at the end of January 1931 and 9,545 at the end of May 1930. Fluctuations in offers of employment followed the opposite direction. The figures for the same period were, respectively, 3,627, 2,131 and 4,042. A marked improvement has been registered during the past few months, determined, as has already been pointed out, by the season of the year. On the other hand, the situation is decidedly less favourable than during the corresponding period a year ago. It has become especially critical for certain trades, such as watchmaking and jewellery as well as for the textile industry.

The fore-going figures, however, are not sufficient to give an accurate idea of the present situation of the labour market in Switzerland, upon which unemployment insurance statistics throw further light. As is stated below, this organisation, created several years ago, was destined to combat the social and economic consequences of unemployment and incorporates a large proportion of the country's working classes. At the close of April 1931, the 126 Swiss insurance organisations in existence, grouping 263,000 insured, counted 10,389 totally unemployed and 27,726 partially unemployed, representing, respectively, a proportion of 4% for the former and 10.6% for the latter. We will add that the number of workers employed in factories, registered in Switzerland by the census of 1929, totalled approximately 400,000. Supposing that the above-quoted proportions should apply to the entire mass of salaried workers, the percentage of the unemployed, while not as disturbing in Switzerland as elsewhere, deserves, nevertheless, the attention of the public authorities.

For several years already, the State as well as employers' and employees' unions have been endeavouring to combat unemployment and its consequences. At a time when the economic situation was still comparatively favourable, certain steps were taken to prevent the repetition of a crisis such as our country experienced in 1921 and 1922. During that same crisis, the measures adopted to combat unemployment absorbed considerable sums, partly in the form of subsidies granted by the authorities and destined to assist the unemployed or create work to provide employment for those out of work on as large a scale as possible.

The system of combating the economic and social effects of unemployment were based upon the principle of assistance, thus presenting certain drawbacks which it is not necessary to develop here. With a view to preventing a possible renewal of the scourge, the *unemployment insurance system* was created several years ago, in accordance with the federal law of October 17th, 1924. These insurance benefits created by the public authorities as well as by private organisations, received subsidies from the State, premiums being paid by employers and employees. In the case of the unemployed, they are granted, for an indeterminate period, an indemnity proportionate to their salary and variable according to prevailing circumstances.

Under the regime of the law of 1924, three types of insurance benefits were constituted: public funds, organised by the townships or Cantons, trade union funds constituted by workers' organisations and parity funds created by employers and employees under the auspices of their respective organisations. The payments of the 126 insurance organisations, comprising, at the end of April, 263,000 insured, totalled 5.4 millions in 1928, 6.8 in 1929 and 16.7 millions last year; the subsidies granted by the Confederation amounted to 6.4 millions for 1930. Expenditures for 1931 are estimated at 30 millions, of which 12 are taken over by the Confederation.

In Switzerland, as in the majority of the countries in which the unemployment insurance system exists, it is a very recent institution. The normal resources would have been rapidly exhausted without the subsidies granted by the State in 1930 and more recently still, thus allowing the unemployed of those branches which were hardest hit by the crisis, to receive indemnities over a period exceeding that determined by law, originally established at 90 days. This maximum was doubled for certain branches and extended to 210 days in one case.

The importance of the choice of measures adopted to combat the economic and social consequences of unemployment is well-known, for it may prove extremely influential as regards the movement itself, viz. it may determine its decrease, or, on the contrary, its extension.

Unemployment insurances, based on the financial participation of both employers and employees, can give good results. Every crisis of a certain intensity, however, is a severe ordeal for insurance organisations and the system upon which they are based.

B.I.S.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

"I suppose this is rather a nice job for you, this writing of pure unadulterated twaddle" that's how an English friend of mine who got hold of my last week's article expressed himself.

Of course, I know, that he could not even do that, i.e. that he could no more write such wonderful articles, than fly, but all the same, a still inner voice tells me, and with some persistence too, that his scathing words had just a wee little grain of truth in them. Does it hurt? No, because in these days of summer—vide last week-end!—one must write something to amuse one's readers, one has to be somewhat lighthearted and one cannot play the heavy all the time.

However, not too much of a good thing! and that is why this week we will let others have more room and we will first of all introduce a rather serious, albeit very interesting subject, to wit:

Weights and Measures:

Irish Times 14th July.

A case for the adoption of decimal coinage and metric reform of weights and measures was made by Mr. E. C. Barton, F.R.C.S., of the Decimal Association, London, in an address to the Dublin Rotary Club. His subject was: "How we puzzle our foreign customers with our funny money and our weird weights." Mr. Kevin J. Kenny occupied the chair.

Mr. Barton, who declared himself an Australian and a retired engineer, said that Britain measured in many ways, and that it would be an advantage in schooling children, in offices and in practical work if the decimal or metric system of calculation and counting in weights and measures and in coinage were adopted. Sentiment had played a great part in the opposition to reform, and this would probably be fatal to any change if it were not easily allayed by paying due respect to names and their retention.

The Swiss Plan.

How can the change be made? They had the guidance of metric history in other lands, especially in those governed by parliaments, such as Switzerland, where the system of government put all law breaking at the mercy of small minorities.

The Swiss reformers were glad to find that "England, a most conservative country, had altered its gallon by 20 per cent. without difficulty in 1824 by the simple device of keeping all the old names." Instead of adopting the kilogram naked and unashamed, the English took the half kilogram as their chief weight, but called it a lb., from which the half-kilogram differed by scarcely more than 10 per cent.

They dealt in the same way with other measures, giving to each set a point of contact with the metric system, keeping the gallon, but making it just four litres.

It was now proposed to follow the Swiss plan in England and to apply it also to money, keeping all their gold and silver coins, but altering the penny by raising its value to one-tenth of a shilling. The coinage then would be virtually decimal, with twenty shillings to the pound, and 10d. to the shilling. By conversion of the pounds into shillings every sum became completely decimal, and fit to use on a slide rule or other machine without conversion.

It would assist the school teacher, the scientist and the industries based on chemistry and physical science, as well as solve the office machinery question.

Such was the case for decimal coinage and for metric reform of weights and measures.

Methods of Caesar's Time.

English speaking people, Mr. Barton said, refused calendar reform, and clung to that of Julius Caesar for 250 years. They had refused metric reform for 150 years, and still clung to methods dating back to the days of Caesar. Several times a "clean-up" was attempted in Britain, and a hundred years ago a law suit led to a search for the standard yard in the Pyx at Westminster, under an expert named Bailey, who found it to be broken and mended with rivets, so as to resemble a pair of tongs.

In Britain such discoveries led only to a general overhaul and the establishment of standards on the old model, or somewhere near it. On the Continent the case was too hopeless for such half measures, and called for more drastic action.

Fortunately, the need was recognised of building up the new measures in agreement without counting. If 10 tens made 100 in ordinary reckoning, then 112lb. should not be called a hundred weight. At present ounces were taken in lots of 16 to make lbs., while inches were taken in dozens to make feet. It would be better to lay out all of them so that they ran in tens and hundreds, thereby avoiding the wasted effort of many calculations.

Such thinking led to the metric system of weights and measures, which was used to-day by every nation outside of the English-speak-

ing nations, and by all science men of every nation. To-day British coinage stood alone surrounded by money systems in which the chief coins divided into 100 cents.

After a brief discussion, a vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Barton.

Yes, and I know some of us who have had to fathom out the query "when is a gallon not a gallon" and believe me, the problem is not as easy as it looks. What?

Another, even much more serious problem with which most Swiss are familiar or of which most of us have heard, is the fight against that dreaded cattle disease called

Foot and Mouth Disease:

Those among us who come of peasant stock and have some roots still in some Swiss Village, have heard a lot about the various attempts to stamp out this horrible disease and of the heart-breaking killing which so often seems the only means. Any new idea which holds out some hope is welcome therefore and the following from the Yorkshire Post, 22nd July, will be read with interest by many:

Remarkable success in checking the recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease seems to have been achieved by wholesale inoculation on the borders of infected areas. The number of animals so treated was 3,203 and only one caught the disease. The serum employed, I am told, is being produced in great quantities on the Baltic island of Riem, where the Prussian Landbund, an agricultural society, has spent some 7,000,000 marks in establishing an elaborate experimental station. Here some 5,000 animals are inoculated annually for the extraction of the serum, the flesh of the animals being sold on the Berlin meat markets. Both the British and Swiss Governments are buying from the Landbund, and their experts are apparently justified in the belief that the serum affords a nearly complete protection.

The treatment is expensive—£2 an injection for cattle and something less for smaller animals such as sheep and pigs—and each injection ensures safety only for a period of 10 to 14 days. Thus two injections are required to protect an animal during the normal period of foot-and-mouth infection, and the owner has also to pay the veterinary surgeon's fees. Little information is available about the progress of the experiments at Riem, but obviously an incalculable benefit would be conferred on agriculture by the production of a cheaper serum affording a longer period of protection.

Too often does it happen that large tracts of our Alps are closed to the wanderers and seekers after Alpine beauties, because of an outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, and I only hope that this new serum may by and by help to eliminate one of the most dreaded calamities that can befall a farmer.

Nature still reigns unbeatable in some parts and in many respects. In many more than we often think, because we do not think! Conquests follow each other, however, and as far as the climbing of Mountain peaks is concerned, there are few of them in Europe which have not been conquered yet. But climbing them is one thing, and conquering them so that everyone, strong or weak, old or young, can master them, is another, and just now the next article, taken from *Windsor Magazine* will give you an idea of the colossal work which is in progress with a view to securing the final

Conquest of Mont Blanc.

How few among the multitude who flock annually to Chamonix have made the ascent of that most famous mountain of Europe, the Mont Blanc!

Those who leave the plains of France for the fashionable resort that lies at its base pass through the steep valley of the Arve. This mountain torrent winds through such a narrow, tortuous bed that both road and railway are hewn out of the rock, one above the other. Emerging, at last, from this dark, sinister gorge, the sight that meets the eye is not easily forgotten. The whole range of the Mont Blanc with its Needles and its mighty glaciers towers above one in imposing splendour.

Here, for ninety-nine out of a hundred visitors, acquaintance with the giant of the Alps begins and ends. Watching the play of light and shadow on the fields of everlasting snow, comfortably seated on the terrace of an hotel, absorbing a long, cool drink, or facing the hardships and perils of a two or three days' ascent in order to reach, weather conditions and endurance permitting, the summit, are two very different things.

For centuries Mont Blanc was inaccessible even to the hardened natives of Chamonix, intrepid hunters of the chamois and the marmot. Avalanches, the extreme violence of the winds in the high altitudes and the intense cold were foes against which the means of those days were not capable of fighting. It was only in 1784 that Balmat and Paccard, both from Chamonix, finally succeeded in reaching the summit, in a very exhausted condition. The

following year de Saussure, the famous Swiss scientist, accompanied by no fewer than twenty guides under the direction of the same Balmat, made the ascent which has become a landmark in the history of mountaineering.

Thanks to the two refuge huts that now stand among the snow and ice, caravans can find food and shelter on the way up; indeed, often they are obliged to stay there for days before weather conditions permit them to proceed or to retrace their steps. Although these and many other facilities have replaced the antiquated devices employed by de Saussure, the ascent remains one achieved by very few, and is rarely attempted except during the few fine weeks of summer. The marvellous panorama that slowly unravels itself during the ascent has so far remained their exclusive privilege.

This is not so any longer. The experience can be had by all, young and old alike, and in an even more striking manner, owing to the rapidity and audacity of the ascent.

There now exists a suspended aerial funicular, one of the most daring feats of engineering ever carried out. Swung from cables supported by gigantic steel pylons, a car climbing at the speed of eight feet a second transports its occupants from the valley of Chamonix to the foot of the great glaciers, at the height of nearly nine thousand feet, in exactly twenty-seven minutes. This part, actually in operation, represents two-thirds of the line, which will shortly reach the summit of the Aiguille du Midi, at an altitude of twelve thousand eight hundred feet, when it will be the highest mountain railway in Europe.

The present line is composed of two sections. The first, stretching from Chamonix to La Para, rises 2,500 feet in twelve minutes; the second, from La Para to the Station des Glaciers, rises another 2,900 feet in fifteen minutes, the latter station being 8,700 feet above sea level.

One by one, firmly embedded in the rock, rise and disappear the long line of steel pylons, not unlike a series of oil wells, some of them over 125 feet high. The top of each pylon forms a flat structure projecting at either side like a wide letter T, supporting the cables for the ascending and descending cars.

There are three cables on each side, the first and most important being the suspension cables that are the rails of the line. Made of a special steel composition, they are tested to a resistance of 350 tons. As the weight of the car is only four tons there is little likelihood of it breaking. A counter weight of thirty-five tons at the base of each maintains its rigidity and prevents any modification in tension due either to the movement of the car or to temperature. Over these runs the wheel of the car, the wheel being on the roof.

The second cable, immediately beneath the suspension cable, acts as an emergency brake. As the car glides swiftly up or down it passes between the jaws of a clutch (Ceretti patent) which automatically grips it in case of accident.

The car is thus immediately blocked in mid-air, no matter how steep the gradient may be. This gradient in places attains as much as 120 per cent., that is one metre per twenty metres. This brake can likewise be operated by hand. Despite this knowledge of security, passengers might be extremely seasick, swinging from side to side in space, especially in the terrific winds of the high altitudes, were it not for the presence of a third cable to steady them. This is not stretched over the top of the pylons like the other two, but runs along the side of the car and prevents it from swaying.

Lastly, the actual operation of the line is by means of a single traction cable, to which both the ascending and descending cars are attached, one at either end. They are worked from the power station at the summit of each section and cross each other midway.

These aerial cars are extremely comfortable and are partly enclosed for the winter. Lighted and heated by electricity, they carry eighteen passengers. A telephone puts them in constant touch with both stations.

The ascent is spectacular. Leaving the station of Chamonix, the car rises abruptly and soars rapidly into space. Very similar to the view from an aeroplane, one watches the valley as its familiar landmarks widen and grow dim. First come green meadows and pine forests, with here and there a mountain cascade.

Then as one climbs higher and higher, the air becomes colder, the wind whistles along the cables and Nature changes her aspect. Vegetation thins out, blocks of stone and mighty boulders that have crashed down from the mountain are mingled with the last remaining trees. Soon all trace of life disappears in the desolate wilderness of the high altitudes.

If the pylons are often high above the ground, some cables are swung from rock to rock over deep ravines with five hundred feet of void beneath one.

Soon snow appears and with it the splendour of the everlasting glaciers, whose history is marked in million of years. At the summit the little Hotel du Glacier offers a welcome that is very pleasant on cold or windy days. From its terrace, more than half-way up the highest mountain of Europe, stretches a marvellous view over the neighbouring ranges and the valley far below.

From this lofty station an audacious car will soon climb farther into the silence of the eternal snow to the great terrace that is being laid out over the world.

To go from Chamonix to the foot of the Great Glaciers, and eventually to the summit of the Aiguille du Midi, without other effort or discomfort than a change of cars on the way up, how simple it all seems, but at the price of what tenacity, hardship and danger has it been made possible!

It was in 1909 that a French company approached the well-known Swiss engineer, Mr. Maurice de Blonay, with a view to studying the possibility of such an enterprise. No man could have been better fitted to take in hand

a work of this importance, by reason of his long experience with the technical difficulties of mountain engineering. He had already built many mountain railroads, routes and bridges, both in France and Switzerland, and perhaps on account of this was keenly alive to the tremendous odds opposed to the realisation of the new project. Confident, however, in its ultimate success, he accepted the undertaking and started on the work the very day after his completion of the famous cogwheel railway from Chamonix to the Mer de Glace.

The prospecting over arid peaks and crevasses where the slightest mishap would be fatal was very difficult, and in certain places could only be done suspended over the precipice, at the mercy of a cord held by guides, reaching the high altitudes, the small caravan lived completely cut off from the world, in a wooden hut twelve feet by six, without windows, and the floor of which was a solid piece of ice. During the great storms, lasting sometimes for eight days, it was impossible even to open the door. In the intervals provisions were carried up on the backs of guides, who took from twelve to fourteen hours to make the ascent, not from Chamonix, but from the Mer de Glace!

This was child's play in comparison with the laying down of the foundations.

TO BE CONTINUED.

UNION HELVETIA, LONDON.

The Editor, Swiss Observer, London.

Sir,

Since you have deemed it a matter of interest to our London Swiss Colony to publish an entirely inaccurate and consequently misleading, "Compte-rendu" about our Club affairs, I and my colleagues trust that you will be good enough to accord to this reply the same measure of prominence in your paper.

If you had first approached us to glean some facts, instead of rushing into print some "badly mangled Minutes," which have been duly rectified since their publication, you would have speedily satisfied yourself that there are generally "two sides to a picture" and we would have gladly enabled you to give "fair play" to your editorial talents.

The Union Helvetia Club, London, has been in existence for over thirty years and its usefulness can hardly be denied. Unfortunately from the very start Debts towards the Lucerne Headquarters of the Association were incurred and relatively heavy interest accruals have swollen our liabilities in the direction indicated. Though we certainly did not see "eye to eye" with our Lucerne Administrators over given claims levied upon our exchequer, it was nevertheless decided that the London Organisation would honour these claims and as a matter of fact debts incurred by our predecessors some 15 years ago are now being discharged.

In 1929 the Club enterprise showed a small profit, but ever since the general conditions under

Zur Bundesfeier-Sammlung 1931.

(Die folgenden eindringlichen und packenden Sätze sind aus der Feder des Dichters Ernst Zahn).

Die Sammlung dieses Jahres ist eine besonders eindrucksvolle, dem Wesen der alten Eidgenossenschaft angemessene. Sie gilt der Not in den Hochgebirgstälern. In den Bergkantonen längst gekannt, hat die Motion Baumberger auch eine weitere Öffentlichkeit auf die Tatsache hingewiesen, dass vielen unserer Hochtäler Entvölkerung droht, weil das karge Brot, das sie ihren Bewohnern bieten, die Gefahren, mit denen sie sie bedrohen, ganze Dorfschaften verleiten, auszuwandern und anderswo ein leichteres Auskommen zu suchen. Unser Fremdenverkehr, unsere neuzeitlichen Errungenschaften der Nachrichtenvermittlung in Wort und Bild sind nicht eitel wohlthätige Einrichtungen. Es gibt heute mehr wie noch vor Jahrzehnten Leute, die, nur die Enge ihrer wilden kleinen Heimat kennend, nichts wissend von Eisenbahn und gutem Leben, in stiller, vielleicht stumpfer Zufriedenheit ihre paar Ziegen hüten und an den Steilhalden das Wildheu sammeln. Zeitung und Wanderer sind in die weltferne Hütte gelangt und haben vom Besserleben des Bruders im Tal Wunderdinge erzählt. Es dauerte wohl eine Weile bis der Bergbauer glaubte. Aber nach und nach gingen ihm die Augen auf. So gross wie da oben bei ihm die Kartoffeln, wurden im Tal die Nüsse. Hoch und üppig wuchs das Gras! Der Landwirt hielt Kühe und Pferde, und über seinen Wiesen und Häusern hing nicht ewig das Verderben des Steinschlages und der Lawinen. Sanfter waren die Winde. Der Föhn rüttelte nicht wie toll an den Fenstern und fasste den Funken nicht, der aus der Esse sprühte, um ihn als Zündfackel in zwanzig Hütten zu werfen.

Dann entdeckte auch der Bergbauer den Menschen in sich. Menschenlust und Menschenheit regten sich in ihm. In den Frauen zuerst! Hei, wie schön gekleidet die Taldamen und gar die Ausländerinnen gingen. So ein Bändlein im Haar, so ein farbiges Hut, ein so leichtes wehendes Kleid und gar ein seidener Strumpf! Die Mädchen machten weite Augen! Es zog sie dort hin, wo die Leute sich so schmückten und das Geld fanden, allerlei Herrlichkeiten zu kaufen. Sie stiegen zu Tal und als sie das bisschen Neuglück gefunden, holten sie die Brüder und Schwestern nach. Oben im Bergheime blieb ein altes, sich mühsam abrackendes Paar. Der Boden gab karg und karger. Die Schulden wuchsen. Elendes Leben! Am Ende nahmen auch die Eltern den Wanderstock. Haus und Hof zerfielen und verwüsteten. Und doch, derer, die so die Scholle verliessen, waren immer noch Einzelne. In Hunderten lebt noch das machtvolle, den Schweizern ureigene Gefühl, die Liebe zum eigenen Grund. Diese Liebe tauscht Kargheit und Kampf und Mühe nicht an Glanz der Fremde. Der ist Heimat alles. Diese Liebe aber will die diesjährige Bundesfeier-Sammlung belohnen. Sie will helfen, wo die dürre Scholle zu wenig trägt. Sie will grüne Matten, in die die Rufe sich frass und Aecker und Hütten, die die Lawine zerschlug, wieder urbar und wohnbar machen. Und wie ihre Matten vor Verwüstung, sollen deren Eigner vor Untreue an der Heimat bewahrt werden.

Merkt auf, Ihr Leute im Tal. Ihr Städter und Bürger, Ihr Landleute und Arbeiter! Merkt auf, Schweizervolk! Es geht mit der diesjährigen Sammlung der Bundesfeier um ein Grosses.

Nicht Grossstadtmenschen, noch Grossgrundbesitzer waren die alten Eidgenossen! Sie wohnten hinter den Wehren ihrer Hauptorte, des stolzen Bern, des geschäftigen Zürich, des streit-

baren Luzern oder hinter den festeren Wehren ihrer Berge von Uri, Schwyz und Unterwalden. Und haben sie sich gewandelt in den Städten, hoch oben unter den Felsen, um die dunklen Bergseen und im Glanz der Gletscher wohnen sie noch, ein Urbild aller, die sich Schweizer nennen.

Ihr kennt sie, die Ihr in den Bergen wandert, Ihr liebt sie wie Ihr ihnen begegnet, die Wildheuse auf der Achsel, die Lastgabel am Rücken, oder die Gamsflinte im Arm, wie sie Euch grüssen, mit kurzem, mehr scheinem als freundlichem Gruss. Euch führen in der Wildnis des Gebirgs und über die Gefahren des Firms, wie sie als Geissbuben jodeln, dass Ihr meint, die ganzen Felskerne seien in's Singen geraten, und wie sie als Mädchen mit grossen, verwunderten Augen unter niederen Hüttentüren stehen! Hei, muss es Euch nicht mitreissen, vom reichen Mittelland bis hinaus an die Grenzen, in das herrliche Basel am Rhein und das kühne Schaffhausen, in das Genf des Völkerbundes und hinunter in's bundestreue lenzige Tessin! Nicht Armuthilfe gilt es! Es gilt mehr: Die Erhaltung des Eidgenossen wie er von Anfang war!

Läutet Ihr Glocken! Knattert und bellt Ihr Böller! Redet, Patrioten! Hinter den Klängen und Schüssen und Worten wird ein stilles Opfer gehen. Den Hut von ernsten Stirnen gezogen, legt Mann um Mann und Bruder um Bruder seine Münze auf einen schlichten Altar.

Und loht nur ihr Feuer auf allen Gipfeln, seid mehr als je und flammt höher denn je. Euer Widerschein, eine Flamme wird sein auf allen Wangen und eine Wärme in tausend Herzen: Wir geben, wir geben am Bundestag zu Gunsten der Brüder, die uns ein Urbild der Väter sind! Wir geben, wir geben als Eidgenossen den Eidgenossen! Wir geben, wir geben, weil uns allen eines mehr Not tut als je: die Einigkeit!