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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Swiss Gymnasts at Olympic Games.

Swiss gymnasts did well at the recent Olympic Games at Helsinki by carrying off a total of 34 medals—11 gold 15 silver and eight bronze. Totals for other countries included Finland, 19; Czechoslovakia, 16; and Italy and Germany, 12 each. In the compulsory events Switzerland came second with 281.85 points. First was Russia with 284.35 points, and others in the first four were Finland (280.45) and Germany (279.30). Switzerland's Stalder gained the best individual result with 57.15 points. Behind him came three Russian athletes, the first two of which gained 57.00 points each, and a Czech athlete who had the same number of points (56.60) as another Swiss, Tschabold.

In the optional events Russian gymnasts were in the lead, and were awarded a total of 574.40 points. Switzerland came second with 567.55, followed by Finland and Germany. In individual results two Russians took the lead, while three Swiss took third, fifth and eighth places.

One of the Swiss gymnasts, Walter Lehmann, a world champion, was injured during training and could not take part in the Games.

Swiss gymnasts have a proud and distinguished Olympic record. At Amsterdam in 1928 their team came first, and was placed second at Berlin in 1936 and at London in 1948. Switzerland was awarded third place at Paris in 1924.

Switzerland's star marksman, Auguste Hollenstein, won a world record at the world Shooting Championships at Oslo last month. The final result showed Hollenstein first with 1123 points (in three positions—standing 359, kneeling 376 and lying 388). Taitto (Finland) was second with 1121 points, and Robert Burchler (Switzerland) third with 1121 points.

Result in order of countries were: 1. Switzerland, 5540 points (individual figures—Hollenstein 1123 (world record), Burchler 1121, Horber 1108, Huber 1099, and Grunig 1089; 2. Sweden, 5489 points; 3. Finland, 5481 points; 4. Norway, 5410 points; 5. United States, 5405 points; 6. Yugoslavia, 5343 points; 7. Argentine, 5304 points; 8. Denmark, 5195 points; 9. Egypt, 4943 points.

The Jungfrau Railway.

On Switzerland's National Day 40 years ago—August 1st, 1912—a simple ceremony took place to mark the opening of the Jungfraujoch railway station, the highest in Europe. The entire Jungfrau railway was built between 1896 and 1912 and opened by stages. The Kleine Scheidegg-Eigerletscher section was inaugurated in 1898, followed by Rotstock in 1899, Eigerwand in 1903, Eismeer in 1905 and Jungfraujoch in 1912. The hard struggle against the rock produced untold difficulties, for the whole of the line between Eigerletscher and Jungfraujoch passed through a five-mile long tunnel

which had to be bored through the hard limestone and gneiss of the Eiger and Monch mountains. This tunnel was completed in February, 1912, and the terminal station, constructed at a height of 11,340 feet, was opened six months later.

A unique masterpiece of railway engineering, the line had cost 15 million francs, took 16 years to complete, and its construction was beset throughout by tough negotiations between financiers. Then, in 1924, the comfortable Berghaus Hotel opened its doors. This was followed, in 1931, by the opening of the High Alpine Scientific Research Station (foreseen and partly financed by Adolf Guyer-Zeller, the man who pioneered the line), and six years later by the Sphinx Meteorological Observatory at a height of 11,723 ft. Thanks to the Wengernalp and the Jungfrau railways, travellers leaving the region of trees and meadows of Grindelwald or Lauterbrunnen can, in two hours, reach the land of high peaks and eternal snows. The contrast is startling. The Jungfrau line is 5.75 miles long and has a maximum gradient of one in four, and in about one hour climbs more than 4593 feet.

Reduction of the Swiss Gasoline Price.

On November 1, the price of gasoline was reduced from 63 to 61 centimes per liter in Switzerland. This decision resulted from discussions held between the gasoline distributors and Federal price control officials. One of the determining factors was the recent decrease of overseas freight rates.

High Petroleum Imports.

Swiss imports of petroleum products have reached a new record. In September of this year, total imports were valued at 9.4 million francs compared with 8.8 million francs in September, 1951. The import of gasoline during the first nine months has risen from 62.3 million francs last year to 69.6 this year.

Swiss Railway Cars for Mexico.

Schindler Rail Cars Ltd. in Pratteln, is currently delivering a series of 57 railway carriages weighing 45 tons each to Mexico. These cars are furnished with the most modern equipment. Mexico seems to have had two reasons for placing this order with the Swiss company. It is an acknowledgement, in some way, of the increasing quality and skill which Swiss workmanship is developing in this particular line of construction. In the second place, the Schindler cars are only half as expensive as those of their American competitors.

Tradition in the Swiss Textile Industry.

Silk manufacturing has been an established industry in Zurich and its vicinity for several hundred years. In many cases, silk weaving firms which have existed for a long time can trace their origins back to still older textile mills that have ceased operation in the meantime. An outstanding example is the firm of Heer and Co. Ltd., silk manufacturers, of Thalwil, near Zurich. Heer and Co. have their origins in a cotton printing firm established more than a century ago which later expanded into several branches. One of these was a dyeing works which still exists in Zurich today. Eighty years ago, the original company was converted into what is now known as Heer and Co. This firm has specialized for a long time in the production of plain silks for umbrellas which are exported all over the world. The firm has in fact achieved worldwide recognition in this special line which testifies for the well-known quality of Swiss products in general.

Increased Industrialization.

During the last seventy years, Switzerland has become industrialized so rapidly that even the outward appearance of the country has been thoroughly altered. According to the 1888 census of population, 364 persons out of every 1000 were employed in agriculture. By 1920, this figure had dropped to 244. In 1951, it has reached an all-time low of 167.

NOTICE.

Compatriots who are interested to revive Social Activities among the Swiss in Auckland and wish to take an active part on the Committee, are asked to write to A. Peyer, 48 Moa Road, Auckland, W.3.

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