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HOME NEWS

The Sixth Swiss Samples Fair was opened at Basle last Saturday morning without ostentation.

The number of exhibitors has slightly decreased compared with previous years, due, no doubt, to the severe and continued economic strain which afflicts a good many of the Swiss industries, particularly the watch-making section, as is evident from the fact that this important trade is represented by five participants only.

Zurich has this year had to cede pride of place to Basle so far as the number of exhibitors is concerned, the latter canton figuring first with 218 exhibitors, constituting over a quarter of the total number of exhibiting firms. Zurich follows with 151, Berne with 107, Aargau with 50, Solothurn with 39, Vaud, Thurgau, Tessin, St. Gall, and Geneva with between 20 and 30 each, Neuchâtel, Graubünden, Fribourg, and Lucerne with between 10 and 20 each, and Valais, Schaffhausen, Schwyz, Glarus, Zug, Appenzell, Unterwalden, and Uri with 10 or under, the two last having only one each.

Reports from Basle indicate that, notwithstanding the present unfavourable conditions, the general outlook is promising. It is to be hoped that the ultimate business results will not fail to adequately compensate the spirit of pluck and enterprise manifested by all who contribute their share towards the success of the Swiss Samples Fair.

* * *

The total receipts of the Federal Posts for the first quarter of the current year amount to 24,981,000 frs. and the expenditure to 30,626,000 frs., leaving a deficiency of 5,645,000 frs. 22,068,000 were absorbed by salaries and wages.

The staff numbers 16,129, a decrease of 641 compared with March, 1921.

Federal Telegraph and Telephone produced 16,060,019 francs receipts, against 16,471,101 frs. expenses; deficiency 411,082 frs.

Revenue from telegraphic traffic yielded 700,000 frs. less than in the first quarter of 1921, while telephone receipts rose by 300,000 frs. over last year's first quarter. The staff of these departments has also been cut down, numbering to-day 6,148 employees, against 6,667 twelve months ago.

The number of "Postscheck" accounts has risen by 3,661 to 43,696, the total turnover for the March quarter of 1922 reaching the appreciable sum of 4,222,646,790 frs.

The Government of the Canton of Berne has prohibited all automobile traffic on the public highways of the canton on Sundays between the hours of 1 and 6 p.m. For the towns of Berne and Bienne special regulations will prevail, which are to be fixed by the local police authorities.

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The Swiss Legation at Brussels has advised the home authorities to warn intending emigrants to Belgium not to leave for that country in search of employment unless provided beforehand with an engagement contract.

The industrial crisis in Belgium, although not so acute as in Switzerland, is nevertheless sufficiently serious to make it extremely difficult for Swiss to find work, so that the number of applications for aid or repatriation which have recently been addressed to the Swiss Legation in Brussels is assuming disquieting proportions.

* * *

It may seem incredible, yet it is a fact that the Courts of Appenzell just recently had to deal with a case of alleged witchcraft.

A number of pigs, belonging to a certain peasant, having perished without the cause of death being apparent, the owner accused another peasant, who not only lives a considerable distance away, but had never even entered the premises of the pig breeder, of having been instrumental in causing the death of his pigs by employing his powers of witchcraft.

The accused brought an action against the slanderer, who in the witness box still stoutly maintained and expressed his belief that the plaintiff had cast a curse on his pigs to which they succumbed.

The Court duly decided against the superstitious defendant, fining him 200 frs. for defamation of the plaintiff, mulcting him in the costs of the action, and awarding 50 frs. out of the fine as damages to plaintiff.

The Court further intimated that it was high time superstition and belief in witchcraft, which were still prevalent in remote localities, were at length eradicated, and that the bringing of actions based on such accusations as the court had just dealt with could not fail to prove the best expedient for ridding the country of such nonsensical yet harmful superstition.

* * *

For the Federal Gymnastic Festival, to be held in St. Gall during the latter part of July, 632 gymnastic societies with 13,410 members have announced their intention to participate.

* * *

Rossini, a stoker engaged at a kiln in the cement works near Wallenstadt, was overcome by fumes; two of his workmates, Cassini and Taraini, who rushed to his rescue, were also overcome. After further efforts by other workers had proved successful in extricating the unfortunate victims, it was found that Rossini and Cassini had expired. Taraini still showed feeble signs of life, and it is hoped that his life can be saved.