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vision, to lay a wreath at the foot of the Statue of Liberty.

#### Foreign Contracts.

A great many of us will, no doubt, welcome the following letter by Dr. Henri Martin, our eminent Commercial Attaché. It appeared in the *Financial News* (3rd Feb.):—

My attention has been drawn to the recent discussions in the Press in regard to the placing of orders—especially municipal orders for electrical plant—abroad, particularly in Switzerland.

In this connection, Mr. D. N. Dunlop, the director of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association, in his letter to the "Yorkshire Herald" of September 24, 1924, and that appearing in the "South Wales Argus" of November 10, makes about Switzerland and Swiss machine manufacturers several statements which, as representative of Swiss commercial interests in Great Britain, I find myself compelled to correct. While it is obviously the business of the British purchasers to decide where they choose to place their orders, your usual courtesy will perhaps allow me to put certain facts before your readers.

It is stated in the above-mentioned articles that the Swiss Government, through indirect financial subsidies to the Swiss manufacturers, enable the latter to export goods at lower prices than would be possible without such assistance. I wish to state categorically that this is incorrect, and that the Swiss machine industry does not receive Government subsidies of any sort or kind.

As Mr. Dunlop correctly states, Switzerland has no raw materials of its own. He doubts, however, whether Swiss manufacturers purchase raw materials and semi-manufactured parts in this country for the execution of British and other orders. It is a fact, nevertheless, that for many years past the Swiss machine industry has purchased, and it is still purchasing, large quantities of such materials from British producers, and this notwithstanding the additional expense involved in the transport and handling of these materials to the Swiss factories.

The director of the B.E.A.M.A. then proceeds: "It must also be borne in mind that British manufacturers of electrical machinery might equalise these conditions to a considerable extent by buying their materials abroad. I need hardly point out that this would be a suicidal policy as regards the welfare of the country generally." Trade being international in its essence, such a statement may lead the reader to wonder whether, or to what extent, there are or are not in Great Britain some leading British manufacturers who actually do purchase raw materials and semi-manufactured parts from Czechoslovakia, Germany and other countries with depreciated currencies.

The writer of the letters above referred to further states that British companies, working in agreement with trade unions as to rates of wages and hours of labour, cannot meet the competition of countries which sell at "dumping" prices, and he also refers to the fair standard of wages for British employees, to their higher standard of living generally, combined with shorter hours of labour. May I point out that Switzerland has adopted the 48-hour week, that the wages in the Swiss machine industry are about the same as those paid in the similar industry in Great Britain, and that the standard of living and education of Swiss workmen is, as everyone knows, higher than elsewhere in Europe.

It will be appreciated that Swiss industries generally and the Swiss export machine industry in particular, have an extremely difficult and exacting task in overcoming disadvantages brought about by the question of obtaining materials, by abnormally heavy transport and handling charges, and by the high cost of living and other adverse factors. If at the same time it is borne in mind that taxation in Switzerland is very high, and that Swiss currency has, for some considerable time past, been at a premium when compared with British currency, it will be easy to come to the conclusion that this industry can hardly afford to indulge in "dumping." It is, therefore, my duty, without wishing to open any controversy, to place these simple facts before the British public, well known all over the world for their "fair play."

The arguments are sound, just and timely.

#### Swiss Electrical Enterprise.

*The Times* (28th Jan.):—

The Brown-Boveri Electrical Manufacturing Company of Switzerland announced through its American representative that it had decided to invade the American field. The company will make an initial investment of from 35 to 40 million dollars by purchasing several large manufacturing plants now in successful operation, and expects to be in active competition with American manufacturers in 90 days.

This decision has been taken after a two-year survey of the field, on the urgent invitation of a number of American railway and public utility companies. The plants to be acquired are on the Eastern seaboard from Boston to Chesapeake Bay, in the mid-west and on the Pacific coast.

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While I think it a fine proof of Swiss enterprise, it is, of course, not always a good sign for a country when manufacturers open up abroad in the way indicated. Not, anyhow, as long as there are those idiotic national frontiers and customs barriers. Think it over, dear reader, think it over!

#### Pro Ticino.

*Financial News* (31st Jan.):—

A conference is being held in Berne between representatives of the Canton of Ticino and the Federal Authorities to discuss measures to meet the economic difficulties of the Ticino, and in particular the question of suppressing surtaxes in the Mont Gothard district, as well as agricultural problems and the question of subsidies for the maintenance of the Alpine roads.

And everyone of us who knows the Ticino and especially, I think, those among us who were privileged to stay there for a time during the war and who then had an opportunity of getting better acquainted with its charming, hospitable and thoroughly Swiss population, will earnestly hope that Mother Helvetia will find means to help as much as is required. The Ticino has not been gifted by Nature with much, except wonderful beauty, which explains the almost fierce love of the Ticinese for his Canton—a love which makes him return to his old village in his riper years to die there and to be buried in that land of his birth.

#### Beauty and the Cresta.

By H. C. Beasley in the *Sunday Express* (1st Feb.):—

"Achtung!" I cried faintly as my execrable luge rounded the bend and careered madly down the main street of St. Moritz. There was I sprawling head foremost over my detestable luge, like a gargoyle fallen from the top of Mont Blanc, and still going strong. And there was She, plonk in the middle of my path, with her back towards me.

"Achtsooong!" I muttered feebly in despair. The next moment the worst happened. There was a startled feminine scream, two green legs went up in the air, and a vision in green sat on my neck. And the abominable luge went wildly on.

Have you ever sat on a luge, with an unknown sweet young thing holding on to your neck with two green legs for dear life? And have you felt the mortification of you and the Sweet Young Thing being mistaken for professional performers until you deposit yourself and your fair burden in a snowdrift, and pray that an avalanche may come and overwhelm you? No? Then, my son, you have not lived.

I was introduced to the Sweet Young Thing at the Suvretta Ball last night. "Yes," she said icily in more senses than one, "we have met before. I understand he is practising for the Cresta Run, and I have promised to dance with him immediately he has done it."

"Great snakes and little guinea pigs," I exclaimed inwardly, swearing by that terrible and binding oath sacred to all true winter sportsmen. "Then that will be to-morrow night," I said aloud. "Fine," she replied with a most tantalising laugh.

I had never seen the Cresta Run, and imagined it to be a longish straight course. I told an old friend, a veteran of the Bob course, of my wager. "You are certainly going to enjoy yourself to-morrow," he said consolingly. But he would take me in hand and see me through. In fact, I could do the Bob course with him and three or four others. It would be all right. I must keep my nerve and do as I was told and leave the rest to him.

I pressed his hand, too full for words, nearly swallowed my Adam's apple, and, feeling like Sydney Carton, went to bed.

Next morning I awoke to the sound of the tumbrils going to the guillotine. They were the bob-sleighs setting out for the course. "They weigh half a ton," explained one enthusiast comfortably, "and when they overturn they usually break your back. You see, here's the start of the Cresta Run. It's three-quarters of a mile to the finish, and it's all over in less than a minute. You do over eighty miles an hour."

That settled it. For the rest of my life I shall always have to wear an artificial Adam's apple. "But this is not a run," I protested faintly. "It's a precipice."

A delighted roar from my four companions showed me that I was for it. Was there no means of escape? I wondered whether the "Daily Express" insurance covered this form of suicide, and thought what a mess I would make on the nice white ice. Then suddenly I found myself on the top of the bob run, in a medieval setting, surrounded by knights in armour.

My warders rushed me into the condemned cell. They screwed great steel rakes on the toes of my boots, steel that was inches long and sharp as dragons' claws; then they enveloped my arms in steel elbow pads; they flung iron casements round my knees; one member of the gang, whom I took to be the hangman's assistant, began to pinion my gloved hands in pads; a huge crash helmet was placed over my head, and I was led to the scaffold. . . .

Now we are starting. At least the others are starting, and I am doing my best to hang on. No, I have not made my will. . . . And that sub-editor whom I cursed before my departure, he was not such bad fellow after all. . . . Yes, I must remain calm. . . . But what in the name of the cat's pyjamas is this?

A frantic yell from the skipper, and we go tearing up the bank at Sunny Corner at an incredible speed and an unbelievable angle to take the hairpin bend. We seem to rise perpendicularly a distance of twenty feet up the sheer banking. A foot from the top, and we come down round the corner, hurtling through space like a comet gone insane. A Mexican revolution or an uprising of cannibals would be tame in comparison. The thing suggests a conflagration in Sheol, and a panic, and the fire engine disabled, and a door that opened backwards, and a crossword puzzle in Chinese, and the largest devil on top and the smallest devil underneath. Whoop! A hill fifty feet high comes swooping at us, and we are at the top and stationary before I can really focus it.

"Good run," said my friend, shaking me by the hand. "I think you've broken the record for this season."

"I felt sure I'd break something," I replied feebly.

That night, after I had claimed my dance, we were sitting in one of those romantic alcoves at the Suvretta, waiting for our coffee. I told her frankly of my nightmare of horror. "And," I said feelingly, "I did it all for you."

"Achtung!" cried the waiter as he tripped in the gloom and spilt the coffee down my neck.

Of course, I have never heard of the S.P.C.T.S.O.C., and probably neither have you. But that Society for the Prevention of Cruelty Towards "Swiss Observer" Collaborators might usefully take its place among kindred bodies. I could then apply to its Inspector to protect me from having to read, week by week, countless articles on Winter Sports. I also know the difficulty of getting up a really handsome subscription in the London Swiss Colony, otherwise . . . . [Sorry, no begging allowed in our paper.—Ed.]

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