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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

To-day's Great Thought.

"The character of a man's wife can almost infallibly be inferred by his generalisation on the sex."—John Stuart Mill.

French Capital Abroad.

Daily Telegraph (18th Feb.):—

The evasion of French capital, continued M. Loucheur, constituted a crime at the present moment. He knew that a number of big loans now being made by Swiss banks to German industrialists were being financed with money exported from France. Among the means for improving the present financial situation, M. Loucheur suggested the floating of an external loan of \$200,000,000. This would enable the Treasury not only to defend itself, but to take the offensive in exchange markets. He was certain that the franc would rise very shortly, but the danger was that it might rise too quickly.

I think it really refreshing how capital—fancy that!—sometimes defeats, or at least endeavours to defeat, the machinations of politicians and, perhaps, even the Haute Finance. The great necessity being for the various members of the European family to work together, I think that for once capital pursues the right path. Patriotism very often, alas, means nothing but parochially narrow-minded efforts towards enriching one's own family at the expense of the neighbours, and that that is bad policy *à la longue*, for the family as well as for the nations, ought to be clear by now.

The Avalanche.

Daily Mail (23rd Feb.):—

The news from Switzerland and the Southern Alps is full of accounts of destruction and death, resulting from the sudden descent of avalanches.

The railway at St. Gotthard has suffered at various points, tourists have been overwhelmed, and in the Val Marone some workman have been buried in their hut.

The cause of these sudden descents is not far to seek. On the higher slopes there have been six or eight weeks of clear, almost uninterrupted frosts, which have caused the existing snow to become loose and powdery.

Now, under pressure of the recent heavy falls of fresh snow, this loose under-snow has given way, and vast masses of it, gathering volume every moment, are plunging down the mountain sides, overwhelming sheep and unfortunate tourists and burying all that comes in their path.

This type of powdery avalanche, serious enough to life and limb, is as nothing compared with the real avalanche, built up of accumulations of snow that may have commenced years ago.

These vast accumulations occur on the plateaux or less steep inclines. The pressure of each succeeding season's snow turns the under-snow to ice, and winter after winter the mass increases in weight and volume.

A moment arrives when, owing either to pressure from higher levels or the mass growing so immense, it overcomes any resistance that holds it. Or, due to an exceptionally mild summer, the lowest stratum against the mountain side is melted, and a sort of water cushion is formed upon which the whole glides forward.

There are other causes, but for some reason such as these the colossal mass commences to move slowly downward toward the valley. If the pace is slow, it is known as a creeping avalanche and can be kept under constant observation. There is little immediate danger from it, and peasants and farmers can be warned of the approaching peril.

Sometimes, however, an avalanche of this type will within a few hours of having become loosed hurl itself downward with the speed of an express train and a noise exceeding all imagination. Nothing can withstand it. Farms and homesteads are swept away or buried, forests of fir and pine are crushed down or carried away like so much straw; cattle, rocks, railways are all carried before it, until it either comes to rest in lower levels, or hurls itself over perpendicular walls of rock into the valleys beneath.

This is the real avalanche which is the terror of the Alps.

We have heard a good deal about avalanches this season, and the above article will be of interest to many, even of us Swiss, who may have but a hazy idea of what an avalanche is really due to and what it does.

Swiss Interests in Egypt.

The Times (21st Feb.):—

The Egyptian Government has been approached with a suggestion for the establishment of direct diplomatic relations with Switzerland. Switzerland has never been a Capitulatory Power, but since time immemorial her subjects in Egypt have enjoyed special immunity like those of the Capitulatory nations.

Swiss domiciled in Egypt, following a custom that has grown up, are protected, according to the canton from which they originate, by France or the United States (which since the war has replaced Germany in this respect).

It is true that there are two Swiss Judges of the Mixed Courts. These, however, are not appointed as representing Switzerland, but because of their special qualifications and the desire to strengthen the Mixed Judiciary as much as possible. Actually they do not sit with the Judges of the Capitulatory Powers on the General Assembly or the Mixed Appeal Court when the latter considers legislation affecting foreign communities in Egypt.

The matter has, so far, been unofficially discussed by local Swiss notables with the Egyptian Government, and it is understood that the Helvetic authorities are much interested. The project in nowise contemplates an increase of Egypt's international obligations by the conclusion of another capitolatory treaty, and does not propose to confer on the Swiss resident in Egypt any more privileges than they now enjoy under French and American protection. It is merely destined to enable the Swiss community, which to-day has important interests here, to have their own house, so to speak, instead of using their neighbour's, as they have done hitherto.

By the way, I have read somewhere lately, but cannot lay my hand on it just now, that French nationals abroad may get the parliamentary vote and parliamentary representation. The same subject was mooted in our Colony during the war, under the auspices of the N.S.H. if I remember aright, but it was then found that the subject was too complicated and not likely to find favour in Berne. However, when one thinks how little is achieved, when it comes to practical achievements, by the various bodies who have the interests of the Swiss abroad at heart, and when one considers how very much more effective parliamentary representation might be and how it could and probably would strengthen the hands of the Swiss Ministers abroad, I should feel inclined that the subject might again be brought up for discussion in our Colony. After all, if the countries where large numbers of Swiss are "at home" had one representative each at Berne, in the National Council, a number of important questions affecting us Swiss in the Diaspora might be given a better hearing by our Government, and, at the same time, our Government might get information which is at present unobtainable, even with the best diplomatic personnel. The main difficulty, I think, would be to find such representative, as it would entail at least temporary residence in Switzerland.

Weather Houses.

Manchester Guardian (17th Feb.):—

The funny little house from which an old woman comes forth when the day promises to be fine and a quaint old man is the herald of a storm is made in Switzerland. These houses are very well put together, but those who do the work cannot receive much remuneration, for they are to be obtained in this country for eighteenpence. The Swiss weather house is almost as old as the hills, and is absolutely reliable. Of the countless thousands that have been made, the old couple are always true prophets of the weather, and the old man has never been known to appear on the dawn of a fine day, nor his wife on a wet one. But although these useful little houses are familiar to everybody, they are very rarely seen except in country cottages, where the inhabitants have usually grown weatherwise by experience, and do not really need the services of the Swiss couple. Possibly had the weather house been made of better material it might have achieved a wider popularity, because so little is expected for eighteenpence that one is rather apt to be sceptical of the reliability of the weather house.

I had always thought that these weather houses were being made in the Black Forest rather than in our country. However, if the above paragraph induces a lot of people to buy these houses—a small house is better than none at all and this is a certain consideration in the present shortage of housing—I shall be pleased, because I have always thought that they lend such an air of additional cosiness to the room they are in or the house they guard, as it were, against bad weather.

Swiss Economic Revival.

The Economist, of February 14, gives the following concise report on last year's economic revival in Switzerland and, as the report is extremely short and yet very informative, I think that a good number of my Readers may be interested in it:—

The year saw a marked improvement in production, foreign trade, and Federal, cantonal, and municipal finance. Railway receipts were greater, the prices of securities higher, and unemployment much less than in 1923.

The ordinary Budget for 1924-25 showed an estimated expenditure of 305,170,000f, against a revenue of 288,660,000f, of which Customs would yield 211,555,000f, against 187,350,000f in the previous year. The change from the pre-war situation, and the recovery, may be exhibited as follows:—

	1925	1924	1913
Deficit, ordinary Budget	16.5	38.3	5.3
Do., extraordinary	... 17.9	20.4	2.0
Total Deficit	34.4	58.7	7.7

It was officially predicted that the ordinary Budget would be balanced in 1926.

At the end of 1923, the total debt of the Confederation was 2,324.5 million francs, or 598f per head of population; it was more by 114 millions than in 1922; the Federal railway debt, 2,433.7 millions; the Federal railway revenue for 1923 was 394,835,570f; the expenditure, 278,080,660f. In 1924, traffic receipts were greater, and the cost of fuel and the wage-bill less. On August 31, 1924, 611 kilometres had been electrified, and about 130 more would be during the winter of 1924-25.

Sterling exchange, starting at 24.73, reached 25.0 on March 19th; by April 20th it was 23.20; in May it recovered to 24.64, and then fluctuated between 23.50 and 24.70, closing at 24.26f to the £. Dollar exchange started at 17.44, rose in May to 17.79, in November to 19.26, and closed at 19.37 cents to the franc.

The official discount rate throughout the year was 4 per cent.; unofficial rates were lower. Public bodies borrowed at about 5½ per cent., industrial companies at 5 per cent. and upwards. New capital issues totalled about 622 million francs, against 675 millions in 1923.

Production and Industry.—The crops were poor, but almost all the leading industries increased their output over 1923. For January to November inclusive the exports were valued at 1,810.8 million francs, the imports at 2,241 millions, the adverse balance being thus 430.2 millions. For the whole of 1923 the figures were 2,243, against 1,717 millions. The building trade continued active. Trade suffered from the competition of countries with a depreciated currency, but the extension of the working week to 52 hours helped production.

At the end of January, the total of persons unemployed (wholly or partly) was 41,141; in April the Confederation discontinued subsidies for relief works, and for the partly unemployed, and in June, when the total had shrunk to 13,881, it closed the registers. In July there were 4,461 places open to workers and 8,235 applicants; at the end of November, the figures were 4,461 and 1,934; but the change was partly seasonal.

The index number of wholesale prices (taking the average of the first six months of 1914 as 100) was 183.2 for December, 1923; 163.4 in January, 173.3 in June, and 165.5 in December, 1924. That of retail prices (showing the cost of living, the figure of August, 1914, being taken at 100) was 170 for December, 1923; 172 in January, 166 in May, and 171 in December, 1924.

Silent Switzerland.

Daily News (25th Feb.) by Robert Lynd:—

I found Switzerland in the grip of good weather. It has had a winter such as would



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