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Swiss compatriots, is published in the *New Leader* by Bertrand Russell:—

We are apt to think that, for careful measurements, it is better to use a steel rod than a live eel. This is a mistake. To an observer in a suitable state of motion the eel would appear as rigid as the rod does to us, while the rod would appear to be constantly wriggling.

New Tunnel through the Alps.

The Times (10th March):—

Shortly before the war the possibility of boring a tunnel under the Eastern Alps to establish a railway connection between Italy and Eastern Switzerland and Bavaria was widely discussed both in Switzerland and Italy. Two schemes had been drawn up, the one providing for a tunnel under the Greina Pass, linking the Grisons with the St. Gotthard line, the other for a tunnel under the Splügen Pass, linking the Grisons with Chiavenna and Lake Como.

The Greina tunnel, which would have been entirely on Swiss territory, had no interest for the Italians. The idea of the Splügen tunnel, with its northern entrance in Switzerland and its southern entrance in Italy, did not appeal to the Italian Nationalists, while it was not viewed with much sympathy by those in Switzerland who thought that Italy was aiming at the conquest of the Swiss cantons, Grisons and Ticino. The war put an end to all conversations on this subject between Switzerland and Italy. The question is now coming up again, but the Italians are planning a new railway line which would run on Italian territory and pass under the Stelvio Pass, so as to link the Valtellina with Northern Tirol. Should that scheme be completed, the railway traffic from Southern Germany to Italy might be diverted to the Italian Stelvio line instead of passing by the St. Gotthard line. It is with the idea of retaining at least a part of that traffic that the Ticino and Grisons cantons are again contemplating the possibility of boring a tunnel which would link up Bavaria and the Vorarlberg with Grisons, and Ticino with Milan on the other.

The Splügen scheme, which would connect Thusis, on the Rhaetian Railways, with Chiavenna, calls for the construction of 55 miles of railroad ascending to a height of 3,398 feet, and for the boring of several tunnels, the aggregate length of which would be 29 miles, the longest—the Splügen tunnel—measuring over 15 miles. On both sides the maximum gradient would be 1 in 4, and the total cost would reach at least £12,000,000, and would necessitate the expenditure by Switzerland of an additional sum of £1,200,000 on fortification works.

The Greina scheme provides for the construction of 64 miles of railroad connecting Ilanz, on the Rhaetian Railways, with Biasca, on the St. Gotthard line. The construction of this line, which would reach a height of 2,700 feet, with 11 gradients of 1 in 20 on the northern side and maximum gradients of 1 in 5 on the southern side, would involve the boring of many tunnels totalling 17 miles, the longest of which, the Greina tunnel, would be 13 miles long. The total cost would be £11,200,000.

As Italy does not seem to take any interest in the construction of the Splügen line, and as the Greina scheme is too expensive, a new scheme has been drawn up for the construction of a tunnel under the San Bernardino Pass, linking Thusis with Bellinzona by means of a narrow-gauge railway which already exists between Bellinzona and Mesocco. This scheme, which would only involve an expenditure of £1,000,000, would involve the construction of a line from Thusis to Mesocco (38 miles), with a tunnel of 3 1-6 miles under the San Bernardino. The Swiss Federal Council granted a concession for the construction of this line in 1922, and it is obvious that this new railroad would establish good and rapid communication between Grisons and Ticino and further south with Milan. It is considered that the necessary funds could easily be raised, as it is already certain that the Swiss Federal Government and the Cantonal Governments of Grisons and Ticino would subsidize the undertaking to the extent of nearly £400,000. This scheme has strong supporters both in Grisons and Ticino, and it is likely that a decision will shortly be taken to put it into execution.

I seldom turn to the *Economist* without finding some comfort, on the same principle as led me to get my hunger satisfied, in my early meagrely-salaried London days, by standing outside a sausage-and-mashed shop in Bishopsgate watching the brown fellows and the nicely cut onions sizzle just inside the window, and envying the carmen and other "humble folk not wearing black coats" who could enter the magic door and, presumably, do themselves rather well. Even to-day I never pass that way without glancing towards that shop, and even thinking of it makes me feel hungry! Well, talking of the comfort I find in the *Economist*, there are reports of fat dividends, assets, etc., and this week (14th March) an article dealing with the—

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Swiss Monetary System.

Although the unification of the Swiss monetary system goes back more than three-quarters of a century, there has hitherto been a conspicuous lack of documentary matter dealing with the subject. The decision of the National Bank of Switzerland to publish a complete and authoritative description of the system, its history, and its ramifications will therefore be welcomed. The Federal Constitution of 1848 laid down the principle of unification in the national currency system, which was partially put into practice two years later. The year 1865 was the next important landmark, Switzerland then signing the first Convention of the so-called Latin Union, which also included Belgium, France, and Italy. Although the principle of a sole note-issuing authority was laid down after a period of controversy by a constitution article in 1891, the National Bank of Switzerland was not, in fact, constituted before October, 1905. The present treatise will be found an invaluable work of reference for all students of European monetary systems.

A Swiss Nurses' Society.

Nursing Mirror (7th March):—

The vogue of forming nursing societies is extending—and rightly so—all over the world. Switzerland is, we learn, one of the latest countries to found a new nurses' association. This is called the "Alliance Suisse des Gardes Mâlades," and it has a committee of eleven members, two of whom are doctors, five female nurses, and a male nurse, and one a hospital director. Nurses of either sex are eligible for membership, provided that they have completed a course of three years' general training.

And everybody who knows anything about the difficult and arduous duties of nurses, the great sacrifices they bear almost without exception in the course of their work, and the cheerful, wonderful spirit which animates most of them, will wish that organisation great success.

The Glories of the Alps.

Memories of the late Mr. Georges Dimier's wonderful lectures are awakened by the following from the *Catford, Lee and Lewisham Journal* of March 13th:—

A lecture, brimful of information and illustrated by a wonderful series of lantern slides, was given by the well-known principal of Christ's College, Blackheath, Mr. Arthur C. Wire, B.A. (London), F.R.G.S., at the college. The subject was: "Five Weeks in the High Alps." The photographs, as was explained by Dr. Peter Cooper, who presided, were all taken by Mr. and Mrs. Wire during a tour in Switzerland. The lecture, which took nearly two hours to deliver, had not progressed far before it was recognised that the photographs, many of which have been coloured, form a wonderful and unique collection. Many are productions of great beauty. In the use of the camera, Mr. Wire betrayed no less skill than he showed throughout in his word pictures of the wonderful scenery of Switzerland. Confessing that the photographs were taken rather as reminiscences of a holiday than for the purposes of a lecture, he remarked at the outset that Switzerland was now only seven hours by air and 24 by rail and boat from this country. Explaining that they made Basle, with its tomb to Erasmus, their starting point, he related that they went on to Murren, the highest village, a delightful spot for a restful holiday. It consisted of one street, along which are hotels, shops, and the dark-brown wooden houses so characteristic of Switzerland. He gave the whole itinerary of their tour.

Mr. Wire told his audience that he did not propose to remain long in the towns. His descriptions of the mountains, valleys, gorges and glaciers were full of fascination. His keen eye for the wonderful things in nature made them all the more interesting. The beauty of the alpine glow tinging the mountain tops, the 31 different species of wild flowers found in one given locality, the valleys and the waterfalls, how the water acted as a saw on the great rock surfaces, and some geological changes that had played their part in the wonderful economy of nature are typical of the points with which he dealt.

The Swiss, he declared, are an industrious and hard-working race. It was seldom that they saw

a boy or girl idle. Even tiny children made lace. It was quite a common thing to see a grandmother, her daughter and grandchild all sitting outside their cottage home making lace.

In the economy of nature, too, he showed that the avalanches, often occurring with disastrous results to life and property, were necessary to Switzerland. A keen observer of the moods of nature, Mr. Wire had a great deal to say regarding the weather on the mountains and in the valleys and in relation to the obscuring mists. One of his most striking photographs was taken amid the peaks with the mist filling the valley and, as it were, lashing like a sea the mountain sides. He observed that, as Manfred said—

The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphur,

Like foam from the roused ocean of deep hell.

"We come to the conclusion," said Mr. Wire, "that the mists still rise as they did in Byron's day." And there were other literary references from Goethe, Ruskin, and so on. He described the cows as being most friendly, and provided a little amusement by a slide showing Mrs. Wire attempting to induce one of these affable animals, met at a high altitude, to eat a chocolate. The pictures taken beyond the snowline—two in a snowstorm and others on the glaciers—and some in the mountain passes, were delightful. There was one of the Matterhorn, "flying its flag," as it was called, or banner cloud—a wonderful cloud effect, and in dealing with the Matterhorn, Mr. Wire showed how the apparent steepness of a mountain peak is largely accounted for by perspective. It was not only the phenomena of the mountains and of the valleys with which he dealt, but also with that of the lakes, and the tremendous depth of these. For instance, he showed that the Lake of Lucerne is ten times as deep as the North Sea at its deepest point. He referred little to the better known parts, but for tourists generally advised that the Swiss mountains should never be attempted without a guide, a connection in which he spoke of some of the perils of mountaineering.

At the conclusion thanks were expressed to Mr. Wire on behalf of the audience by the Chairman, who complimented him upon the lecture and the most magnificent photographs that he had ever seen.

A Swiss to preside over the Port of Danzig.

The Star (14th March):—

The Council of the League of Nations chose General de Loes (Switzerland) as president of the port of Danzig.

Danzig was taken from Germany in favour of the Allies, who undertook to set up a free city under the protection of the League.

What price the Swiss Navy now?

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