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The Swiss Federal Council has agreed to grant a credit of twenty million francs (roughly

£800,000) for the reorganisation of the country's aerial defence. When the Swiss Army was mobilised in August, 1914, it possessed no aerial force, and could only muster ten pilots, with foreign certificates. At the end of the War 81 pilots and 30 observers had been trained in Switzerland, and the Army had at its disposal 68 planes.

For defensive and observation purposes it is now proposed to build 105 new aeroplanes, mostly through private enterprise.

#### A Franco-Swiss Discovery The Star, 17th Dec.

A private exhibition of coloured cinema films taken by means of a new process which it is declared is likely to revolutionise the film industry, has lately been given at Basle.

The invention is that of a Frenchman, M. Berthon, of Paris, and a Swiss, whose name has not been announced, but who lives at Lausanne.

It is stated that two financial groups have been formed already to exploit the invention in Western and Central Europe, and that several American cinema interests are competing for a monopoly in the apparatus.

It is claimed that the process is no more expensive than the present black and white photography, and it requires little change in the apparatus that is now used.

The only modification is a small glass disc, costing not more than 4s. The invention is described as being not chemical but optical, and is said to reproduce colours in a natural way. In the first instance the manufacture will be reserved to a leading Continental firm of film producers.

#### The call of the Snows. Daily Sketch, 2nd Dec.

To many people, a Swiss holiday conjures up a vision of large hotels, bars, dancing till all hours, intrigue and romance. In fact they think of Switzerland in terms of Michael Arlen.

If you are looking for this kind of life you will be disappointed except in one place—St. Moritz.

The ideal Swiss holiday, which has also the advantage of cheapness, consists of setting out from England with nothing but a voluminous pack. (It is surprising what you can get into them if you try!)

You then make a tour of the smaller resorts, staying two days in each and doing what local opinion tells you is the best expedition in each place. Often you can get to your next destination on ski, spending a night in a hut on the way.

On one of these trips I remember coming across a notice in a small inn which read as follows:

Gentlemen guests please to restrain from ogelling the maid-servants as it flutters their hearts and no work is resulted!

Now, I would not have missed that for the luxury of all the palace hotels in the world!

But that brings me on to another aspect of Switzerland. I refer to the curious effect of rarefied atmosphere on the human heart.

Old hands know that it is just as impossible to go to Switzerland without falling madly in love as it is to cross the Atlantic. Consequently they are ready for it.

The atmosphere affects others in different but equally peculiar ways. I remember a young man who travelled out with me from London some years ago. He proved a charming companion and revealed no symptoms of lunacy.

Suddenly, at a Swiss station, he leapt up, snatched a cushion, and ran down the platform crying:—

“Peelohs! Von franc!”

As the passengers put their heads out to buy a pillow he hit each one a terrific blow with the cushion.

But do not let me discourage you with these reminiscences. To all of you who are hesitating whether to go to Switzerland for the first time, the Riviera, or some other place in search of heat, I would tell stories of friends of mine who through taking their shirts off on the climb have had their skin badly blistered by the Swiss sun.

When you have finished the climb, packed your climbing-skins in your rucksack, and feel the snow flying out in powder behind your ski, when the mountain across the valley looks so near that you could reach out and touch it, and you watch it turn rose in the sunset as you speed down. . . .

That's the moment we “madmen” wait all the year for, and that's what we mean by the “call of the snow.”

#### A Rival to the St. Gotthard Railway? Daily Express, Dec. 9th:

Anxiety reigns in Swiss Federal commercial circles concerning the decision of the Italian Government to construct a railway tunnel under the Stelvio Pass, at the junction

of the Swiss, Italian and Austrian frontiers.

This new international route between Germany and Italy by way of Tyrol will be a strong competitor to the St. Gotthard Tunnel route, as it passes outside Switzerland and will bring Munich 125 miles nearer to Genoa than to Hamburg. It will also lessen the distance between Milan and Munich by seventy-five miles. The new tunnel will be more than eleven miles long.

When there is an abundance of supply, the only thing is to increase the demand and Italy's Premier Mussolini seems to see to this being done alright and in many ways. Let us hope, anyway, that there will be enough work to feed both railway lines to capacity.

And, writing of railways brings me to an article which I find in the *Glasgow Herald* and which fills me with parochial pride:

#### The Winterthur Locomotive:

Early in 1926 the Swiss Locomotive and Machine Works decided to build a high-pressure locomotive which would work at a maximum boiler pressure of 850-lbs. per sq. in., with an average working pressure of about 700-lb. per sq. in. Such a range allowed for a short period of overload and compensated for the limited water capacity of the boiler which, in the final design, was only about half that of the usual locomotive boiler. On account of the complications which would have arisen condensation was ruled out, and high-speed uniflow engines with reduction gear were selected for the drive. For reasons of simplicity and reliability simple expansion was adopted with drop valves for admission. The boiler and engine were constructed first, and tested thoroughly in the works for about one year. The results obtained were so favourable that the locomotive itself was then built.

In the bench trials a maximum of 1,200 b.h.p. was obtained at 550 revs. per minute with a boiler pressure between 700 and 780 lb. per sq. in., and the average steam consumption was 13.2-lb. per b.h.p. hour. The road tests showed the engine to be very smooth on the road and easily started. Comparative tests were made with a conventional 170-lb. pressure twin-cylinder locomotive under similar conditions of hauling express trains of 250 to 300 tons. The results show a saving on the working of the high pressure locomotive of about 32 per cent. in the coal and 42 per cent. in the water.

The above, incidentally shows that the steam-age is not yet passed and done with.

#### Car on Brink of 4,000 ft. Abyss: Yorkshire Observer, Dec. 10th.

That his car was nearly blown over a 4,000 ft. precipice in Switzerland was the exciting experience related to a reporter by Mr. Miles Mander, the playwright, who has just returned to London.

A few days ago Mr. Mander was being driven from Meiringen toward Grimsel along a mountain road 4,000-ft. up, when the car was struck by a hurricane. “I was told,” said Mr. Mander, “that it was an extraordinary phenomenon which occurs in Switzerland very rarely—a foehn or warm wind which comes down from the icy mountain tops with great velocity, and, by melting the ice, causes an avalanche.”

“Our car, powerful as it was, was lifted almost into the air and carried off the road right to the very edge of a very deep precipice.”

“The only thing which prevented us from going right over was the trunk of a fallen tree which barred the way. It was a wonderfully lucky escape.”

“It took us more than three hours to get the car back on to the roadway.”

The *Foehn* is blamed for the accident. Rightly, perhaps. But then, only a day or so ago I read in an English Paper, but have forgotten now where, that the *Foehn* is due to the winter-sporting English, who, not used to the heated and very comfortable carriages in use in Switzerland, insist on keeping the windows open and thereby let out tiny streamlets of hot air which, combining, produce that dread *Foehn*!

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