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there is no doubt that this statement is in accordance with the facts. This explanation does not, however, alter in the least the actual deterioration of the trading relations between Switzerland and England nor does it alter our painful realisation that, should the new English blockade decision be rigorously applied and the necessary navycerts no longer be issued, the economic and social situation of Switzerland will certainly become very strained indeed. Switzerland must now wait and see. If her imports of essential goods through the last line of supply are to be cut off, it will affect the very means of existence of our country. How essentially important this last import route is for Switzerland can be appreciated from the fact that, in order to remove the goods lying in Lisbon, a lorry service through Spain was organized with financial help from the state beside the existing shuttle-service between Lisbon and Genoa. This was done in order to secure, in case of a further intensification or a possible extension of the war — America — a last reliable passage for in and out traffic. Anyone familiar with Swiss economy knows that with the maximum extension of cultivation at home and production of "Ersatz" — products, also with a planned guiding of both production and consumption together with a total rationing, a certain amount of relief is attainable without however solving the difficult problem of Swiss economy.

Our attitude corresponds with our policy of neutrality, our vital interests and the structure of our economic life. That is why the expectations in our "besieged fortress" are based on the hope that England will duly respect Switzerland's right of existence thereby sparing us dangerous social troubles and a stronger lining-up with the so-called European new order.

Even then the situation of Switzerland will still be quite serious enough.

### GOOD-BYE TO AUTUMN.

Flowers no longer reign.  
Supreme in splendid garb  
Though royal rose  
And hardy chrys  
A while prevail.

Silent Battles scarce avail  
'Gainst might and crush of time. —

Leaves spattering like rain  
Laid low by icy rime,  
Complete our span of gloom.

Yet autumn spreads delight  
In many woodland scene  
Motley tints remain;  
Summer's parting mien!

Anon on sunny heights  
Manse or cottage seen  
Show creepers red aflame  
All colours put to shame.

No war or human shifts  
May human kind despoil  
Of nature's holy gifts.

J.J.E.

### SWISS BIRTH-RATE ALARM.

*Under this title the "Catholic Herald," November 14th, is publishing the following statistics. We do not know whether the comments reflect the true position and the general census taking place next month will possibly produce a different picture.*

The drop in the birth-rate from 37 for every 1,000 inhabitants in 1928, to 15 for every 1,000 inhabitants in 1937 is viewed as alarming. The birth-rate in the neighbouring countries for 1937 was 14.7 for France and 19.7 for Germany. In 1938, the German rate had risen to 20.3.

In 1900 there were 90,000 children born in Switzerland, but only 61,000 in 1937, notwithstanding a population increase of 800,000, which would indicate 120,000 births as the normal rate for 1937. As in other countries, the lowest birth-rate is found in urban communities.

However, a higher birth-rate generally is reported for the Catholic Cantons of Lucerne, Uri, Nidwald, Fribourg and Valais.

For the whole of Switzerland, the surplus of births over deaths is 3.7 per thousand, but it is 8 per thousand for the Catholic Cantons. To maintain the stability of population there should be an average of three children to a family; but out of 100 families, 30 have no children, 20 have one child, and 20 have two children.

Federal Councillor Etter, a Catholic, presiding at a meeting at Berne, said that measures to protect the family in Switzerland are imperative.



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