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Autor: [s.n.]
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à une guerre où deux grandes armées se cherchent dans un désert, sans grand désir d'ailleurs de se rencontrer et d'en venir aux dernières extrémités. Elles emploient des armes trop différentes, leurs objectifs sont trop divers pour qu'un choc violent paraisse possible. Le spectacle ne manque pas de piquant. Mais si l'on songe à tout cela on comprendra mieux peut-être que nous ayons fait tout à l'heure allusion à l'éventualité d'un match nul. En effet on a l'impression très nette que, du point de vue de la répartition des sièges entre les partis, cette consultation n'amènera guère de surprises. C'est un signe de stabilité. Les amateurs d'aventures seront seuls à s'en plaindre. Pour ceux qui sont conscients de la gravité des temps présents — et c'est la grande majorité de notre peuple — ils s'en réjouiront de tout cœur.

Pierre Béguin.

FIFTY REMARKABLE YEARS OF SWISS RAILWAY HISTORY.

The year 1943 is a mile stone in the Bernese and Swiss Railway history, particularly with regards of the modern accessibility of the region of the alps. Fifty years ago, on the 1st of June, 1893, the 22 km. long Thunersee Bahn running along the left bank of the lake of Thun (Scherzlingen — Därlingen) was opened to traffic. It formed the continuation of the Böödeli Bahn (8.5 km.) which is the connecting link between the lakes of Thun and Brienz. By this junction the Böödeli Bahn, which constituted the first section of an intended normal gauge railway from Lucerne to Berne via the Brünig, Interlaken Thun, Belp and which had for twenty years an isolated existence, was included into a greater railway network. The line Berne-Thun built in 1859 and leading to the gateway of the Oberland was thus extended to the Metropolis of the Jungfrau regions, Interlaken. From there the traveller was able to continue his journey by rail to Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen by the Berner Oberland Bahn opened in 1890 and could even reach Mürren by the funicular railway which ran for the first time in 1891. But not only did Berne get direct rail communications with Interlaken and the Lüttschinen valley, but in the same month of the same year, the cog railway to the Schynige Platte and the long intended Wengernalp Bahn received their first travelling guests. Thus it was possible to reach from the Federal capital the most beautiful view points of the Bernese Oberland and in comfort and according to the then prevailing conceptions, quickly, Wengen and even the little Scheidegg.

The Schynige Platte Railway, since 1895 owned by the Berner Oberland Bahn and together with it was electrified in 1913, overcomes in about an hour a height difference of 1383m. (roughly 4,500 feet) by a length of 7.4 km. and with the aid of the Riggenbach Cog Wheel principle. The rail starts at Wilderswil n/Interlaken and ascends through beautiful wooded slopes and ravines to the summit. On the top there is an alpine garden with over 460 different rare alpine plants and an observatory for the study of alpine flora and alpine botanical questions and ground analyses. From here the beautiful highland excursion to the 2681m. high Faulhorn is generally started with a descent to Grindelwald via the Great Scheidegg and the Rosenlaui.

The Wengernalp Railway, with its roughly 20 km. long track, was electrified already in 1909/10 and has become an economic factor. It carries summer tourists

as well as winter sports guests from Lauterbrunnen and from Grindelwald to the beautiful alps and skiing districts of Wengen, Wengernalp, Alpligen and the pass height of the little Scheidegg (2064 m.). An idea of the importance of this railway can be obtained by comparing figures of the passengers carried:— in 1893 37,742, in 1913 174,527, and in the record year 1937 465,879. This also proves the rapid development of the W.A.B. which is not only a life artery for tourist traffic, but is equally as important for the local inhabitants. In the war year 1942 this railway paid roughly frs.330,000 in wages and salaries, roughly frs.20,000 in rates to the various municipalities, besides an amount of about frs.10,000 in income tax. The W.A.B. was the presupposed undertaking to the construction of the highest European railway, the Jungfrau Railway built in 1896-1912. These two railways are since 1915 under the same management, now carried on since 1942 by Colonel G. Frei, the successor of Dr.h.c. K. Liechti, who was in charge for 27 years. For the 50th anniversary of the Wengernalp Railway a beautiful and profusely illustrated commemorative publication of traffic — historical and cultural interest will be issued, written by Hans Michel. The Thunersee Bahn, opened fifty years ago which include a group of small railways like the one into the Simmental and into the Frutigenental and the steamship company on the Thuner and Brienzer See, was in 1913 incorporated with the Bern Lötschberg Simplon Railway, with which the canton of Berne had at last realised an eighty-year-old, and at several occasions repropounded project, which, in real and true confederate consideration, was postponed time and again in favour of the St. Gotthard undertaking. At a cost of a total of 133 million francs the line Thun-Brig, 85 km. long was opened to traffic on 15th July, 1913, as the first international normal gauge electric railway. As a mountain railway it connects the two cantons of Berne and Valais, separated by a chain of mountains, and overcomes the obstacle easily and smoothly. It opens up the Kandertal with its side valleys, the Lötschental and the northern approaches of the Brig Visp Zermatt and Gornergrat and Furka Oberalp Railways, and at the same time it serves the districts of the upper Valais. As it is not only serving tourist traffic, but has to satisfy international transport requirements, it has an exceptionally high number of safeguarding constructions. There are 45 tunnels including the great Lötschberg tunnel measuring 14,612m., 157 railway bridges and hundreds of protection works. For the latter alone nearly ten million francs have been spent during 1913 to 1938. Whereas the first world war and the long aftermath have been very unfavourable for the Lötschberg Railway, yet the last few years have proved the efficiency as well as the safety of the undertaking in an unmistakable manner. In 1941 3,850,845 travellers with 8,956 tons of luggage have passed over the line, 79,749 animals and 4,289,491 tons of merchandise have been conveyed. Of what importance the Lötschberg Railway together with the St. Gotthard line is to-day for Switzerland, was already foreshadowed in the message of the Federal Council to the Chambers on 28th May, 1907, regarding the subsidy discussion and need not further be stressed. Its foundation history as well as its traffic statistics are well represented in the works of the late Director Prof. Dr. Fr. Volmar and of the superintending engineer of the south side Prof. Dr. Ch. Andreae.