

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1961)

Heft: 1391

Rubrik: Business in Switzerland

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BUSINESS IN SWITZERLAND

To catch the fleeting moment . . . a miniature camera

Almost everybody nowadays has his camera, but how often does he have it with him when he really needs it? Just when he has the opportunity of taking that sensational photograph? In order to make good this deficiency, the Swiss precision industry has just launched a miniature camera of an entirely new conception. It is a reflex-type camera, the size of an ordinary packet of cigarettes. It has two lenses, one for photographing, the other for sighting on the ground glass screen, and uses ordinary 35 mm. film, widthwise, that is to say measuring 12 by 21 mm. Owing to its small size, the "Tessina" camera can easily be carried with one wherever one goes, in a pocket or handbag, so that it is always handy for that unexpected shot, especially as the film moves forward automatically under the effect of a spring, which has to be wound only once for every five photographs. Among the interesting accessories available with this new camera, which takes 23 black-and-white photographs on a reel or 18 colour photographs, let us just mention a strap for attaching the camera to the wrist, like a watch — an advantage particularly appreciated by climbers, skiers, riders, etc.

Automatic Reception Service for Dry-Cleaners

The growth in the size of towns, the rise in the standard of living, etc., have resulted in new needs calling for new solutions in the way of automation. This holds true, for example, for the upkeep of clothes, on which much greater stress is placed to-day than ever before. In order to enable housewives, and especially those who go out to work, to leave their clothes at the cleaners after closing time, a Swiss firm recently designed an automat giving complete satisfaction not only to the general public using it but also to dry-cleaners, for whom it represents to a certain extent a new, round-the-clock reception service. The "Cleanbox" repository, which looks something like a cupboard, can be set up in the street or in front of a dry-cleaning establishment for use after hours; on a certain sum of money being inserted, it delivers a plastic bag, in which the clothes to be cleaned are wrapped, as well as a label to be filled in with the customer's name and address and put in with the clothes. The bag with its contents is then inserted into the apparatus, which automatically shuts and drops the parcel into a special compartment that can only be opened by the man from the cleaners, who empties it at least once a day. The sum of money inserted in order to obtain the bag is naturally deducted from the cleaning bill.

Big success of a little apparatus

In spite of the progress achieved in the mass production of goods, there are still a good many people who like to make articles of daily use last as long as possible, either for reasons of personal convenience or because of difficulties of supply. This is the case, for instance, in regard to razor blades, which a great many men like to use — or have to use — more than just for one morning. This is easily possible if one owns a simple and efficient apparatus for sharpening the blades. A Swiss manufacturer solved this problem some forty years ago; to-day, the "Allegro" sharpener, which is very strongly built, makes it possible for millions of men, all over the world, to go on using the same razor blades for several months — in fact for a whole year. The number of these gadgets sold now exceeds three millions.

Swiss aid to solution of parking problems

The problem of parking is still — and will probably long remain — a very pressing topical question! A Swiss inventor has just presented a new system of automatic parking, consisting of a series of platforms suspended from a continuous chain moving along rails. These rails describe, in the vertical plane, curves which can be arranged so as to make the best possible use of the available space. This system therefore possesses considerable elasticity and offers great scope, since it is adaptable to all types of premises, either in buildings or in the unused spaces under the intersections of auto-routes, for example. In addition, it can be made either entirely or partly automatic, controlled by the admission and exit signals, thus allowing ingenious combinations ensuring a fast flow of traffic. The car, once driven on to the platform by its driver, goes through no subsequent manoeuvres and stays in its mobile garage until the driver comes back to fetch it. The latter inserts the key he has been given into a special lock, which operates the movement of the chain and brings his car opposite the exit. This system, known as "mobile parking", makes it possible to plan garages of all sizes, with any number of parallel chains. Two outstanding features of the mobile parking system are the small space it requires compared with the methods used so far and the short time required for driving cars in and out. A large building in Switzerland, at present in the planning stage, is being designed to hold 768 cars in a space of 150 x 240 x 50 feet, it being possible for all the vehicles to enter or leave within 20 to 25 minutes.

A new device for the campaign against noise

A Swiss electronic appliances factory has put on the market a new apparatus for measuring the intensity of sound. The "Minophone", as it is called, is very small and light, weighing in fact less than a pound and measuring only 125 x 85 x 40 mm., which means that it is very compact, no bigger than a paperback. Provided with transistors and running on a built-in battery, it can measure intensities of sound from 40 to 125 decibels. The microphone normally used forms part of the apparatus, which has a charge checking device preventing any incorrect readings due to a run-down battery. This apparatus can also be connected up to an extra microphone attached to a cable, which can be used for measuring sound in not easily accessible places, or to a feeler which converts the Minophone into an apparatus for measuring vibrations. This handy apparatus, which is extremely easy to use, is destined to render invaluable service, not only in the fight against traffic noise but for numerous other purposes, particularly in engineering workshops, garages and all industrial or other types of concern where machinery is used.

Interesting Swiss consignment for India

A Swiss manufacturer in Basle has participated in the setting up of a complete plant for the manufacture of caustic soda, at Tuticorin, in the Madras Province of Southern India. This plant will produce caustic soda at a continuous rate of 100 metric tons per 24 hours. The Swiss firm has delivered the concentrators in which the washing of the caustic soda is concentrated from 45 to 98 per cent, the pipe system and the indirect heating at a high temperature, as well as the flaking machine and the filling apparatus, material which had already been supplied in 1959.