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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Achievement of the Swiss metallurgical industry

The steel works of Georges Fischer, Ltd., at Schaffhausen, which for many years past have specialised in the production of large objects made of cast steel, recently delivered the wheels for the eight Pelton turbines set up in the Kemano Central Station of the Aluminium Company of Canada, 374 miles to the north of Vancouver. These wheels, made of stainless cast steel, with 23 troughs and each one weighing 24 metric tons and measuring 13.45 feet in diameter, are remarkable for the fact that each one of them was cast in a whole piece, and that they equip the most powerful Pelton hydraulic turbines in the world. Each turbine has a capacity of 150,000 h.p.

A centenary in the Swiss watchmaking industry

It was just a hundred years ago, that there arrived in the town of Neuchâtel a certain Mathias Hipp, who was one of the pioneers of the application of electricity to watchmaking. This self-taught man, born in 1813, served an apprenticeship in the watchmaking trade; in 1852, he was entrusted by the Swiss Government with the task of organising telecommunications. For eight years, Hipp worked strenuously at the organisation of the Swiss telegraphic network, and its adaptation to Italy, and at the same time pursued his studies regarding the application of electricity to watchmaking. Established in Neuchâtel, he showed intense activity as a research worker and scholar, perfecting an infinite number of new apparatuses and experiments. It was he, who, a century ago, founded the business which has now become the firm of Favag Ltd., which to-day also specialises in the manufacture of electrical clocks and apparatuses, employing for this purpose the technique of weak currents.

Swiss equipment for a foreign cheese making industry

Within the framework of a plan for the reorganisation of the dairy industry, a Yugoslav State Organisation has just given an order for supplies to a firm in Geneva to the value of half-a-million Swiss francs. This order consists of two plants for the manufacture and the conditioning of processed cheese, which are to be put into service at Belje and Novi-Sad, and ten automatic packing machines for butter, which are to be set up in the dairy establishments of the principal towns, in Yugoslavia.

Deep sea watch

During its record submersion of over 36,000 feet, which took place on the 11th January, 1960, the bathyscaphe "Trieste" took with it, attached to the exterior of the hull, a Rolex automatic chronometer-bracelet, which was — of course — water-tight. The movement of the chronometer was enclosed in a special water-tight case, which was of the same type as the ordinary cases of this make. Thus this Swiss watch was subjected to a maximum pressure of one-ton per square centimetre, without suffering any damage or perturbations. It has now become a museum piece, having been acquired by the famous "Smithsonian Institution", in Washington.

Swiss novelty for the textile industry

A Swiss industrial firm has just put on the market a novelty which will doubtless prove very successful in the textile industry. The novelty in question is a

retractable bobbin, which is intended to take the place of the cardboard tubes which have been used up to the present for the vaporisation of threads made of synthetic fibres (nylon, Terylene, etc.). In view of the fact that the vaporisation of these threads, which constitutes an indispensable stage in their preparation, induces a shrinkage, the cardboard tubes on which these threads are generally wound, become useless as a result. On the other hand, the "Allegro" retractable bobbin, which is made entirely of an alloy of hard aluminium and stainless steel, diminishes in diameter under the pressure of the shrinking threads, but can be brought back to its original diameter, after usage, to serve another time. It is composed of a mantle possessing a variable diameter and a mandrel or core, which, when inserted into it, maintains the bobbin at its maximum diameter during the winding, but can be withdrawn for the vaporisation. The "Allegro" bobbin, the diameter of which is $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches, can be manufactured in various lengths; this new, patented accessory enables one to achieve considerable economy in regard to the cost of material.

Industrial development in Locarno

It has been announced that the Swiss factory for the manufacture of Schindler motors and lifts, at Ebikon-Lucerne, has just acquired some ground in the Canton of Tessin at Locarno for the purpose of enlarging the subsidiary plant which it has owned for several years in that region.

Tribute to a Swiss watch-making physicist

Recently, five foreign professors were awarded the degree of doctor "honoris causa", of the French University of Besançon. Mr. Henri Mugeli, a doctor of physical science, Director of the Swiss laboratory for horological research, and professor at the Faculty of Science at the University of Neuchâtel, was among the personalities honoured.

Switzerland leads in electronic watchmaking

After three years of study and of perfecting, a factory at La Chaux-de-Fonds has just launched a novelty which will prove to be a milestone in the history of modern watchmaking. This novelty consists of a small clock, run by means of an electric battery, which is capable of functioning for nearly two years, without any interruption and which, practically, does not require any setting right as regards the time, the exactitude of its movement being so perfect. Moreover, the exactitude of its functioning is independent of the tension variations of the battery, which is an ordinary torch battery of 1.5 volt, so that its gradual weakening in no way modifies the going of the clock. In order to obtain this result, it has been necessary to invent a movement without any electric contacts, based on the application of entirely new principles, and on the use of a transistor. A point deserving mention is that the new clock "Secticon" is not a unique object or something designed for a laboratory, but is a model which is already being produced as a standard article, in order to be put, gradually, on all the markets of the world. Quite independently of its revolutionary conception, the movement itself has been constructed in quite a new manner: it is composed of three separate elements, which are easily interchangeable and con-

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nected with each other in the simplest manner, without the aid of any kind of tool, by means of small bolting levers. These parts, of small dimensions, are delivered to the watchmakers, packaged in transparent standard wrappings, which greatly facilitates the repair service. For such a revolutionary construction, it was, of course, necessary to find a casing which was rational, aesthetic and modern in its conception and execution. The plastic cases of the various models were conceived by specialists in industrial designing, so that the "Secticon" is incontestably the most modern little clock in the world. It should be added that two of the standard models, taken at random, were submitted for examination to the Swiss Office for the official control of watches, where the daily time kept by the watch was registered as having only shown a variation of less than two seconds per 24 hours, which corresponds largely to the requirements demanded from chronometers. This performance gained for the clocks in question the mention of "particularly good" on the time-keeping certificate. Another point that deserves to be mentioned in favour of the new creation is that, in spite of it being a precision work, the "Secticon", as a result of its standard manufacture, is put on the market at a price which does not exceed that of a good quality watch. This success goes to prove that the Swiss watchmaking industry has not been caught napping by the development of technical progress, but, on the contrary, is capable of affirming itself in the new scientific domains.

Switzerland produces heavy water

After Norway and France, Switzerland has become the third country in Western Europe to produce heavy water. The Ems Works, Ltd. of Ems in the Grisons have thus become suppliers of heavy water to Swiss institutions for scientific research, to the Universities, to the Federal Technological Institute and to the European Centre for Nuclear Research (ECNR), at Meyrin, near Geneva. This heavy water is produced with the aid of machinery built in collaboration with the firm of Sulzer Brothers Ltd., in Winterthur.

New harnessing of hydro-electric power in the Valais

Economic imperatives, for the production of electric energy, act as an increasingly active stimulant for the realisation of ever larger production units. The Swiss hydro-electrical plants are also following this tendency. As an example, we would cite the construction of the "Société Anonyme des Forces Motrices" of Mattmark, for the exploitation by means of two subterranean stations of the reservoir of the Viège of Saas-Fee. The lower station of Stalden, situated near the village of the same name, will receive the waters from a regulariser reservoir, of a capacity of approximately 3,531,545 cubic feet, by means of a supply gallery 10.23 miles in length, ending in a subsidence conduit of 1.425 mile. The equipment of this station will comprise two horizontal alternators, of a unitary power of 100,000 kVA/80,000kW; these alternators, made by the Oerlikon Works (Zurich) are the largest to have been built up to the present for a speed of 428 revolutions per minute. Each one of them will be worked by two Pelton turbines, carried on cantilevers and totalling 110,000 h.p. per group. These turbines are to be built by the firm of Messrs. Escher Wyss of Zurich. The Stalden Station will be put into service in 1964.

Swiss achievement in psycho-physiological field

An engineer, from Macolin, near Bienne, has invented an interesting apparatus in the domain of psycho-physiological tests. This device, which constitutes an innovation, makes it possible to measure and to record very exactly, the length of time it takes a person to react to visual or auditive excitations, in connection with experiments made in order to measure the degree of attention or of fatigue, and which give very valuable indications regarding the psycho-physiological state of the person concerned. This apparatus gives the results of the experiments, recorded on sheets of paper of a normal size, in a form which enables them to be compared and to be used for statistical purposes. This machine can be easily moved from place to place — its volume does not exceed that of a typewriter — and it can be worked either by the electric power available on the spot, or else by means of a battery. As the set of acoustic and visual signals are fixed in advance, the "Beck" apparatus can be operated by non-skilled craft. It can thus be used on the spot, in schools or plants, for example, for interesting tests for the purpose of studying working conditions, etc.

COMMITTEE OF SWISS CATHOLICS IN LONDON
Grand Christmas Draw 1960.

The annual Christmas and New Year Party, followed by a dance, was held on Sunday, 1st January 1961, at Westminster Cathedral Hall, S.W.1, and was greatly enjoyed by both young and old.

The winners of the major prizes in the Christmas Draw were announced. The list of all prize winners has been distributed to the various selling centres. Prizes should be collected from the Rev. Father J. Scherer, St. Ann's R.C. Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1 (telephone Abbey 2895), preferably through the ticket sellers, by 1st March 1961, latest.

Thanks to the generosity of all our friends, we are very pleased to state that the sale of tickets and donations have realized just over £200.

O. Grob,
Chairman.

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Basel, den 20. Dezember 1960.

Herrn A. Stauffer,
Editor "Swiss Observer",
London, E.C.2.

Lieber Herr Stauffer,

Mit raschen Schritten geht das Jahr dem Ende zu, das für Sie den Abschluss Ihrer beruflichen Tätigkeit als Editor des Swiss Observer bedeutet. Meine Frau und ich möchten diesen Anlass nicht vorbeigehen lassen, ohne in Dankbarkeit der aufopfernden Arbeit zu gedenken, mit der Sie während vieler Jahre dem Swiss Observer den Stempel Ihrer Persönlichkeit aufgeprägt haben.

Als frühere Mitglieder der Kolonie wissen wir, wie sehr der Swiss Observer ein Bindeglied unter den Landsleuten in England gewesen ist. Zu allen Zeiten war unter Ihrer Führung das Blatt gekennzeichnet durch einen Geist, der das Gemeinsame gegenüber dem Trennenden hervorhob, der ein moralisches Prinzip erstrebte, ohne zu predigen und der kritisierte, ohne zu verletzen. Zusammen mit vielen andern Schweizern im Ausland, sind wir Ihnen hierfür zu dauerndem Dank verpflichtet.

Für die kommenden Jahre im Ruhestand möchten wir Ihnen und Ihrer Gemahlin unsere herzlichsten Wünsche entbieten. Möge Ihnen beiden bei guter Gesundheit noch eine lange Zeit glücklichen Zusammenlebens beschieden sein.

Mit vielen guten Wünschen von uns allen zu den kommenden Festtagen und für das Neue Jahr verbleibe ich

stets Ihr
Sig. R. PFENNINGER.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique
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