

Fritz de Quervain †

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FRITZ DE QUERVAIN †.

(“*Lancet*,” 10.2.40.)

Professor de Quervain died in Berne on January 24th suddenly from acute pancreatitis. With him passes a surgeon of international fame who was also a great Swiss. Fritz de Quervain was born in 1868 at Sion (Valais) of Huguenot stock which settled in Switzerland in 1668; his father was a protestant pastor of Bernese origin, his mother came from the Jura bernois. This accounts for his perfect command of both French and German. He studied medicine at Berne under Kocher, Sahli, and Langhans, and after qualifying in 1892 he worked for a short time at the physiological institute under Kronecker. He then became clinical assistant to Kocher, whose chief interests at the moment were endemic goitre and its operative treatment. In 1894 he settled as a surgeon at La Chaux-de-Fonds, the centre of the watch industry in the Jura, where he drew patients from that populous district and the adjoining Franche-Comté in Burgundy. Despite a very large surgical practice he continued his scientific work and in 1902 he was appointed reader in surgery at Berne and produced the *Encyclopædia of Surgery* begun in collaboration with Kocher. In 1907 appeared his *Surgical Diagnosis*, which ran through nine German editions and was translated into many languages. In 1910 he was invited to direct the surgical clinic at Basle and he occupied this chair till 1918, when he succeeded Theodor Kocher at Berne. There he remained until 1938, when he reached the retiring age.

De Quervain was a fine clinical teacher, his diction was elegant and precise, his deductions always logical. From Kocher he inherited the painstaking technique which leaves nothing to chance. He set himself to ascertain the success of his operative work by critical statistical records and a careful follow-up. While his scientific interests were manifold, the study of everything concerned with goitre ran like a thread through his life. His monographs on goitre and on cretinism have become classical; with the social aspects of endemic goitre he dealt by founding the Swiss goitre commission, through whose work he popularised the importance of iodine as a preventive remedy. The introduction of iodised table-salt in most Swiss cantons was chiefly due to him. In 1926 he organised at Berne an international goitre congress. Surgical tuberculosis was another favourite theme; he was against any exclusive treatment, allotting to heliotherapy, X-rays and operation each its proper share. But there is hardly a branch of surgery on which he has not left some valuable contribution; his almost encyclopædic knowledge included not only medicine but also the natural sciences. One of his last papers was on the contribution of Switzerland to the progress of medicine.

TRANSPORT SERVICES AND THE WAR.**Repatriating 1,500 Swiss.**

(“*Railway Gazette*,” 2.2.40.)

Many letters of appreciation have been received by the Southern Railway Company from different sources in connection with the management and movements of trains and ships occasioned by the war. The following

letter was sent by the Swiss Minister to the Minister of Transport:—

“ Sir, — Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities the Swiss Legation were entrusted by their Government with the repatriation of some fifteen hundred of their compatriots from the British Isles. And if, as was the case, it was possible to effect this repatriation in spite of the manifold difficulties to be surmounted and the uncertainty of prevailing conditions, this was due in no small measure to the courtesy and untiring assistance of the management of the Southern Railway Company and the willing co-operation of their staff. In pre-war days the same company rendered Switzerland considerable service by making the country known to the English people as a holiday resort, and the Swiss Government would not fail to express their high appreciation of the attitude taken in this respect, and their gratitude for the help extended to their compatriots during the first weeks of the war. I should esteem it a favour if you could kindly consent to convey this expression of appreciation to the right quarters. I have the honour to be Sir, your obedient servant, — C. R. PARAVICINI.”

The Minister of Transport, in transmitting this to the Chairman of the Southern Railway, added his own tribute as follows:—

“ My dear Holland-Martin, — I am delighted to forward to you a letter which I have received from the Swiss Minister, together with a copy of my reply. I should like to add an expression of my own appreciation of the efforts of the Southern Railway Company in this direction,—Yours sincerely,—EUAN WALLACE.”

ANGLO-SWISS TRADE TALKS OVER.

(“*Financial News*,” 12.2.40.)

Negotiations with the Swiss delegation now in London on matters affecting commercial questions arising out of the war, have, it is learned, been completed, although no signature of an agreement has yet taken place.

These negotiations must be distinguished from the conversations aiming at a Swiss-Allied war trade agreement, which are proceeding in Paris and Berne and which are understood not to have yet reached a conclusion.

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