

Alexandre Vinet

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Switzerland Consolidates her Credit on E.P.U.

The Swiss Government has concluded a series of agreements with the countries which are debtors of the European Payments Union, and it now asks the Chambers to ratify them. It is a well known fact that Switzerland is an important creditor of the E.P.U. The agreements which she has just signed have allowed her to consolidate this credit and to provide for its partial reimbursement. At the same time, these agreements form the necessary bases for covering future surpluses.

Switzerland possessed a primordial interest in the maintenance of the Union, but this would not have proved possible without the agreements which have taken place between the creditors and the debtors. Thus, Switzerland was able to renew her participation in this institution, for another year, without the Swiss authorities being obliged to open up new credits.

Development of the Swiss Hat-making Industry

Although the existing 20 concerns belonging to the Swiss hat-making industry are of a definitely artisanal character and only provide employment for no more than 1000 persons, this branch of trade, nevertheless, continues to develop. Its exports have tripled since 1950 and, in 1953, they attained almost 3,000,000 francs.

This Swiss industry only exports high quality hats and owes its success essentially to the finished work characterising its products. It finds its inspiration in Paris, whose models it adapts in such a way as to bring them within the reach of a more widespread range of customers. Owing to the difference in the seasons of the Northern and the Southern Hemispheres, it has been able to assure regular work for itself, all the year round. Sweden ranks first among the customers of the Swiss hat-making industry, followed by the United States of America and then by the Union of South Africa.

New Progress in the Founding Technique

A molding-machine for foundries, which has been perfected by a Swiss undertaking, was shown recently at a specialised exhibition in the United States, where it aroused great interest. The exhibit in question is a twin molding machine, created by the Kallnach Machine Manufactory and Foundry Works. It is already being used in the big Swiss foundries, as well as in several foreign countries, where it is proving to be a great success.

This machine, which is automatic, makes it possible for one operator to accomplish the work of two or three men, by producing the two parts of a sand mold, at the same time. In order to

make this operation possible, the machine, which weighs hundreds of kilos, turns over completely. Then, steel pincers delicately pick up the mold and place it on the conveyor belt.

This new machine brings with it revolutionary progress into the founding technique.

Improving the Quality of Swiss Milk

Great efforts are being made at the present time to improve still further the quality of the Swiss milk. In this connection it is interesting to learn that there exist various categories of milk, the two principal ones being the milk used for the manufacture of cheese and milk for human consumption. In Switzerland, where the quality of the cheese plays a primary part, endeavours have been chiefly directed up to the present towards the breeding of cattle whose milk would be best for the manufacture of the Emmenthal or Gruyere cheeses. As a result, the Swiss milk used for cheese is the very best known, and no other country has succeeded in surpassing its quality.

As for the milk intended for consumption, the situation is somewhat different. Nevertheless, studies recently undertaken in this respect show that, on the whole, Swiss milk possesses all the qualities required of a good milk for drinking purposes. The number of bacteria per centimetre cube is inferior to that to be found in most other countries. It is only the United States which has achieved better results in this particular domain.

ALEXANDRE VINET

Vinet's thought represents one of the purest traditions of the Swiss spiritual inheritance. Besides other traditions, it preserves a necessary balance. Hence the importance of this preservation. Excellent studies have been made of Vinet, not only in Lausanne, Bern, Basle, or Zurich, but in Paris, Amsterdam and other European capitals. Indeed, that the influence of his thought goes beyond the narrow frame of country and confessional milieu is evidenced by the fact that the chapel of one of the Oxford colleges contains a stained glass window dedicated to the memory of the Swiss philosopher.

Alexandre Vinet was born in 1797, at Ouchy, the harbour of Lausanne on Lake Geneva. He came from a family in which French and Piedmontese blood was mixed with that of ancestors of French Switzerland. His father had taught school before becoming a civil servant. He was a fine, learned man, who raised his children in an atmosphere of austere idealism. His mother, who was endowed with an exquisite sensibility, excelled in preserving joy and peace in her home. After studies at the College and Academy of

Lausanne, Vinet was called, at the early age of twenty, to teach the French language and literature at the "Gymnase" in Bâle. His stay on the River Rhine was to last twenty years and he used it to complete his own instruction while earning his living. These were fruitful years, made still more rich by a happy marriage. There was mourning soon enough, and illness also to blend with the brighter hours, but Vinet's intense activity never lessened.

In addition to his teaching which was all but light, Vinet was going on with his personal work. He was supplying his pupils with a "Chrestomathie française" unique of its kind which inspired for almost a century generations of young scholars. Articles and books followed in close succession. The "Memoire sur la liberte des cultes" aroused heated discussions on the question of the separation of Church from State. The "Essais de philosophie morale et de morale religieuse" helped to train innumerable readers in the practice of serious meditation. The reputation of the young professor was growing. Several foreign universities came forward with flattering offers, but he modestly felt that he wanted to devote himself entirely to his native land. In 1837, he left Basle, regretfully, considering it his duty to accept a professorship at the Lausanne Academy. He was installed on the very day Sainte-Beuve started his famous course on Port-Royal. Difficulties of a political and ecclesiastical nature were to bring Vinet's official teaching to an end eight years later. During the last months of his life he devoted himself to the private school for girls which today still bears his name and to the new "Faculte libre de theologie."

In Lausanne as in Basle, the Vinet's home was a hospitable and lively place. Many were the Swiss who found there durable friendship and intellectual stimulus, not to speak of foreigners such as the critic Sainte-Beuve, the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, the Scotch philosopher Erskine, and many others. All enjoyed meeting there for free conversations. But Vinet never allowed social duties to interfere with his writing, which included, besides his "Essai sur la manifestation des convictions religieuses," speeches, articles on current problems, literary criticism, poetry, to say nothing of a voluminous correspondence rich in good advice, solace, encouragement and understanding. In 1847, a premature death put an end to this active life. Vinet died at Clarens, in the very house where the fantastic genius Byron had written some of his immortal verse.

Vinet's life is devoid of outstanding events but few human careers have been so rich in experience and humanity. Gravity, simplicity, severity toward himself, torturing struggle, sharp scruples, all played their part. Vinet's

thought never ceased to radiate in a variety of fields. The very principles for which he lived and struggled are of a burning actuality: fight for liberty of conscience, for respect of opinions, for defence of the individual and his primordial rights.

A convinced patriot, Vinet was deeply attached to his native land. He dreamt of a fully republican and truly democratic government, of magistrates lacking in personal ambition and eager to assume responsibility. He saw in Switzerland the prototype of Europe and humanity which some day would find in an enlarged federalism the status consistent with reason and evangelical teaching. In his mind religion and mankind were closely bound together.

As stated before, the scope of Vinet's words exceeds the borders of his country. The problems that attracted his attention are of a universal order. Vinet belongs to the tradition of Pascal. The esteem that men like Hugo and Lamartine had for him, the numerous testimonies of respect which came to him from all quarters, are proof of his universality. One should not forget Brunetiere's admission that he had rarely had an idea which Vinet had not expressed before him.

As philosopher, theologian, moral leader and literary critic, Alexandre Vinet remains one of Switzerland's outstanding personalities, a worthy servant of human thought in some of its deepest and loftiest manifestations.

OUR FATHERLAND

(By L.E.M.)

(Continuation)

TICINO: One of Switzerland's most unusual, but also beautiful and picturesque Cantons, is the southernmost Tessin. Its people, although predominantly of old Italian stock, are now more and more influenced by migration from northern Switzerland. The steady inter-mixing is doubtless improving the hardy mountain people. They are hard-working, simple folk, very independent, typical Tessiner in outlook, but above all ardent Swiss in character.

Because of the key position to the important St. Gotthard Pass, frequent quarrels occurred between the major powers since Roman time, and the Tessin suffered much. After gaining full independence she finally joined the Swiss Confederation in 1803.

Few of us realise that this canton is also one, if not the most interesting from the point of view of art. There are a great many fine churches, paintings, sculptures and buildings of real beauty in most parts of the Tessin. And still less do we know these days of the great artists like Domenico Fontana, joint architect of the Vatican; Carlo Maderno, who built the facade of the great St. Peter's Church in Rome; Baldasare Longhena, the architect of the Church