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Many Swiss from the Auckland Colony entertained our compatriots from the boat. They were taken on sight-seeing trips, to different socials, or to homes, and wherever these young men appeared they certainly left an excellent impression with their good behaviour and exemplary conduct.

Early in January the "Allobrogia" sailed for Timaru and later to Napier, where the passengers for the Continent went aboard. In both these ports the ship's crew had also a pleasant welcome from local Swiss, or such people who have contact with Switzerland. The trip back to Europe via Panama was quite smooth and pleasant, but crossing the English Channel in heavy fog the "Allobrogia" (according to air-mail advice received from home) collided with another ship. Fortunately little damage was caused and the vessel arrived safely in Antwerp, her home port.

H. GILGEN.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Fruitgrowing

Switzerland possesses more fruit trees than any other country in Europe. This fact has been confirmed by a recent enquiry, the results of which have just been published. These show that there exist as many as 20.8 millions of such trees in this country, that is to say, more than four trees per inhabitant.

The Value of Swiss Salaries

The value of Swiss salaries in certain industries has gone up by about a third since 1939. Detailed figures show that the incomes of factory, transport and building employees have increased by 117 per cent., but the effective rise is 28.7 per cent. when the increased cost of living is taken into account. These figures were announced recently by the Swiss Federal Office for Industry, Trade and Labour after an enquiry made into the incomes of 35,000 workers. The increases vary according to the trades, and unskilled labourers and women workers have benefited most from them.

Swiss Woollen Products on Foreign Markets

Exports of Swiss woollen products (exclusive of ready-to-wear garments and knitted wear) in 1953 amounted in value to 65 millions Swiss francs, in round figures. This sum is considerably higher than that for 1952. Exports of woven fabrics constituted the major portion, these having doubled since 1951, and being several times greater than in the last year before the war.

Next in order of importance come woollen yarns, in particular combed woollen yarns, intended for industrial utilisation, i.e., for the manufacture of knitted and woven goods, as also knitting wools prepared for retail sale. Woollen yarns are traditional articles of export and, already prior to the war, Switzerland exported large quantities of this commodity. Nevertheless, she has improved her position in this branch as well as in that of woollen carpets.

The woollen industry plays an important role in Swiss economy. On the international plane, it is only a small industry when measured in accordance with the volume of its manufacture, but it may be considered as being important in consequence of the quality of its products. It has developed considerably during the last few decades. Swiss woollen manufacturers have brought all their efforts to bear on the constant modernisation of their production plant, rather than on its extension. As a result, there has been a progressive increase in capacity of production. As a matter of fact, this increase corresponds more or less to the rise in the figure for the population, that is to say, to the extension which has taken place in the domestic market. However, exportation is of vital importance to a certain number of undertakings. The increase in exports is all the more noteworthy as Swiss manufacturers are running up against a great many difficulties on the foreign markets. But, they are inured to this, as they are constantly obliged to meet foreign competition on their home market, and they can count on the quality of their products to work for them.

98.2 per cent. of all Telephonic Connections are Automatic

During the last year, the number of automatic telephone stations in Switzerland has increased still more. Thus, 98.2 per cent. of all telephonic connections are now automatic. A semi-automatic service has been established, to a large extent, with France, also.

Swiss National Exhibition of Agriculture

Work is advancing rapidly on the site, in Lucerne, where the 11th Swiss National Exhibition of Agriculture, sylviculture and horticulture, is to be held from the 16th of September to the 11th of October, next. Forty thousand square metres, out of a total superficial area of 200,000 square metres, have been reserved for the putting up of various buildings. In addition to the exhibition buildings, there will also be a large space, surrounded by stands, from which the various demonstrations can be watched easily by 9000 spectators.

Extension of Swissair Activities

Swissair is extending its activities. For the summer season it intends to introduce air freight services to North America. Once a week a freight aircraft will leave Kloten, touch down at Basle, and then fly off to the United States, bringing back on its return journey freight taken on through the offices of a special freight service which has been established in New York by the Swissair. At the same time a DC-6B will carry each week to the United States freight which has been collected in Geneva.

Passenger transport is also to be developed. Swissair will increase the number of its trans-Atlantic flights; it will introduce a weekly service, Zurich-Geneva-Lisbon-Dakar-Recife-Rio de Janeiro-Sao Paulo, will create a line between Switzerland and Beyrouth, via Istanbul, and will put some DC-6B on its airlines to the Near East. It will also reintroduce its afternoon service between Berne and London, and will extend its night flights in several directions.

As a result of an international agreement, there will be a reduction in the tariffs for the transport of goods, and it will be possible to send collective consignments, similar to those accepted by the railways. Swissair, following in this respect the general tendency to be observed in commercial aviation, is thus contributing towards making the aeroplane the ideal vehicle for the transport of goods, possessing a small volume and a great value, such as constitute, as a matter of fact, the greater portion of Swiss exports.

Swiss People Prefer Small Cars

About two-thirds of the motor-cars circulating in Switzerland are vehicles of less than 11 h.p. This fact has just come to light as a result of a recent checking up on the number and types of cars to be found here. During the last few years, small cars have distinctly gained in popularity.

As regards the origin of these cars, more than a quarter of them come from Western Germany, the other principal suppliers being, in order of importance, the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France and Italy.

As for lorries, rather more than a third are manufactured in Switzerland, the rest coming mostly from the United States and Germany.

OUR FATHERLAND

[Continuation]

MOUNTAIN DISASTER: As a diversion from our past descriptive articles of Switzerland, we give you a story of calamity that struck two villages in the Canton of Glarus in 1881. It

is an event almost forgotten, in fact not even known to most of us.

One of the most delightful valleys for a summer visit is Elm, in the Sernfthal, a branch valley of the Linthal. This was the scene of an appalling catastrophe, and as this was the greatest of its nature that has occurred within the living memory of the Swiss some account may be of interest.

The village of Elm was situated close beneath a steep tree-crowned mountain known as the Plattenbergkopf. This mountain was really a buttress of other and higher mountains behind. One mile down the valley was Musli, another village where dwelt some hundreds of people who spend their lives in tilling the land, milking and cheese-making.

The people of both villages had another occupation besides their agricultural work. The Plattenbergkopf was rich in slate and, as there was a good market for that commodity, they quarried for years into its base. Had there been a skilled engineer to supervise the work, this catastrophe would never have occurred.

The mining was carried out with no attention to safety devices, and a hole 600ft wide and 200ft deep was made in the base of the mountain. There was no shoring up of the roof of this immense cavity. In 1876 cracks began to appear in the mountain, including a very large one which split it across behind the summit. This crack slowly widened and lengthened. By 1881 it was 15ft wide. Some people expected the mountain would eventually fall, but nothing was done about it, and they went on with their ordinary occupations at Elm and Musli. The last part of August and the first part of September, 1881, was very wet. On September 7th masses of rock began to fall from the Plattenbergkopf. On the 10th a committee of "experts" investigated the mountain and reported that there was no immediate danger. Falls of rock were now constantly occurring, and the mountain began to groan and rumble like some great beast suffering internal agony.

Sunday, September, 11th, was also wet. In the afternoon a number of men gathered at an inn close beneath the mountain at the foot of its labouring rocks. They seemed to have been quite unconscious of the danger. At 4 p.m. people of Elm were on the watch and expecting a fall, but they also did not recognise the danger.

The first fall from the mountain came at 5.15 p.m. It was a small one compared with those that were to follow, and it stopped short of the inn by less than twelve yards. No one as yet was alarmed but preparations were begun to move the sick and bedridden from Elm. At Musli there was no alarm whatever and people from the village walked up the valley to see what had happened. As for the sightseers who had retreated a little