

# Notes & gleanings

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## NOTES &amp; GLEANINGS.

The Geneva Correspondent of *The Times* writes:—

The annual report of the German Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland includes some frank admissions of successful British competition in certain manufactures.

It records that British steel producers have adopted the system of appointing their own agents in Switzerland, and keeping them supplied with stocks on consignment, instead of pursuing their former plan of sending commercial travellers but twice a year, who visited only a few leading firms. It may be added that although the Swiss steel trade is at present very dull, the British firms are successful in booking the few orders that are in the market.

In the opinion of the Chamber, Germany has little prospect of regaining her former predominant position in the trade in varnishes and colours, as they have lost favour with Swiss buyers owing to the use of inferior substitutes in their manufacture. This admission should encourage fresh effort on the part of British varnish makers, who made great headway in Switzerland at the beginning of the war.

With regard to electrical material, the report states that Swiss engineers prefer high-tension porcelain insulators of British or Danish manufacture to those from Germany, in spite of the latter being cheaper. German insulating material is said to have lost its reputation by reason of the poor qualities furnished during and after the war. German meters and telephone apparatus are stated to be inferior now to the Swiss articles.

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Mountaineering, for which the season is opening with news of the first ascent of Mont Blanc, is quite a modern pastime. Formerly it was the lakes, not the mountains, that were the chief attraction for tourists in Switzerland, and in the first edition of Murray's "Handbook to Switzerland," published in 1838, the writer remarked, concerning Mont Blanc, "it is a somewhat remarkable fact that a large proportion of those who have made the ascent have been persons of unsound mind."

(From *The Bradford Daily Telegraph*.)

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The Editor of *The Poor-Law Officers' Journal*, writing on the problem of the vagrant, says:—

The subject of vagrancy and unemployment is no new one. In its varying aspects it has been discussed for years, and now we find Councillor Frater, Chairman of the Tyne-mouth Board of Guardians, in an address to the Northern Poor-Law Conference, bringing it up-to-date and offering a solution. His solution, in brief, is that the habitual vagrant should be under the control of the police. The weakness of the present system, he maintained, was that it neither deterred nor reclaimed, and no reform would be adequate that did not bring the habitual tramp under some sort of control. He advocated detention, labour colonies on the *Swiss system*, and useful and productive work in which the man could take a real interest.

After criticizing Councillor Frater's recommendations, he winds up his leader as follows:—

It is immaterial to say that the system is working in Continental countries. Many things are in operation which would not suit an insular country like ours. Switzerland, which is held up by Mr. Frater as an example, has few traits in common with Britain. The people have different racial characteristics, they have been accustomed to a system of regulation, from army service downwards, similar to that which in the past few years we have grown accustomed to

call Prussianism and for which our people have clearly shown their distaste. In any case the Poor-Law Guardians are equipped to deal with any class of poverty. They are there for that purpose, and we feel that Mr. Frater has paid the Poor-Law a left-handed compliment in suggesting that it should be stripped of part of its authority. The "labelling" of the people is a Continental characteristic, and the British Poor-Law since the days of Elizabeth has dealt with flesh and blood. But if it is to be "labels," why should the police get the job?

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From *The Railway Gazette*, June 24th:—

The French and Swiss railways are gradually showing signs of recovery from the neglect of maintenance which the war enforced upon them. The Swiss railways, which of course suffered much less in this respect than the French, are already beginning to look quite smart. One notices a considerable increase in the personnel in many stations, which would appear to be more than adequate for the duties to be performed, but it must be admitted that the Swiss railway officials as a body look and are remarkably smart, intelligent and obliging, probably because on few railways in the world is there such a high standard of general education among the staff.

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*The Daily News*, in reporting on the Exhibition of Manufacturing Chemists at Westminster Central Hall, states:—

The show proves that practically all the synthetic drugs which used only to be made in perfection abroad are now being made at home. Nevertheless, it is significant that some of the most interesting exhibits come from the Continent. A Swiss firm, for example, has invented a hypodermic syringe, the "Tubunic," which doctors call the Rolls-Royce of hypodermic therapy. Instead of having to spend much valuable time in mixing and sterilising his injection, the up-to-date doctor carries it about with him in a sealed collapsible tube, to which a perforated needle is attached. Thus the injection is available at a moment's notice, and a moment may well save a life. Another clever invention from abroad is a sedative in the form of a soup square, called "Sedobrol." Bromide takes the place of salt in "Sedobrol" beef tea, and after the most nerve-racking day you sleep peacefully in consequence.

[Both the above exhibits come from the Hoffmann-La Roche Chemical Works at Basle.—*Ed.*, S. O.]

A correspondent writes to *The Daily News*:—

Sir,—In Lord Bryce's interesting study of the Swiss Constitution in his book on "Modern Democracies" he mentions that a Swiss deputy is paid 25 francs a day for each day that he attends the meetings of the Chambers. Could we not make our payments to M.P.s dependent on their attendances? But then, of course, Swiss government is a democracy. Ours is a mixture of despotism and oligarchy.

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SWISS-GERMAN TRADE PACT.—As the result of the negotiations which have been taking place between the representatives of the Swiss and German Governments regarding the future regulation of the commercial relations between the two countries, it has been decided to maintain without modification the Treaty of Commerce between Switzerland and Germany. The two countries will continue to extend to each other the benefits of the most-favoured nation clause. The German tariffs, taking into account the modifications necessitated by the Treaty of Versailles, will be applied to Switzerland in virtue of the most-favoured nation clause.