

Peasant Art in Switzerland : a notable Book

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HOME NEWS

The material damage resulting from the recent railway accident near Bellinzona is stated to be about 1.4 million francs, of which 400,000 francs are in respect of the locomotives.

The final sequel of the little Italian frontier dispute is an order of the Federal Military Department, placing under arrest of from ten to two days seven Swiss soldiers and N.C. officers belonging to the 30th Regiment for having chanted, on the evening of April 6th, Socialist hymns in a Luganese restaurant, thus irritating members of the general public present, amongst whom happened to be some Italian Fascists.

Last Sunday the people of Obwalden rejected a proposal introducing the secret vote in the election of its authorities; its acceptance would have meant the gradual disappearance of the Landsgemeinde.

The accounts for 1923 of the city of Zurich close with a surplus of 11.6 million francs, a small deficit having originally been anticipated in the budget. Out of this amount the remainder of the war debt will be written off, two millions will be devoted towards relieving the housing problem, and 3½ millions to stabilising the annual income from taxation.

Figures, prepared by the statistical office of the canton of Zurich, show that a large part of the income in the form of taxes, etc., levied from urban centres, is absorbed for social and educational purposes in the agricultural districts. In this way the city of Zurich, for instance, pays about 20 million francs per annum into the cantonal coffers, of which six millions only are spent in the interests of the city proper; a similar proportion applies to the town of Winterthur. Some of the rural communes benefit by as much as five times the amount they raise by local taxes and contributions.

During the month of April unemployment has further considerably decreased, 4,650 totally unemployed finding regular work. The improvement has been general, the building and metallurgical industries absorbing the greatest number. In the official statistics, clerks and intellectuals are not included; amongst the latter, it is stated in some quarters that there is a considerable number of university men who have studied law and national economy.

To prevent its misuse, and at the request of Swiss shipping firms interested, the Federal Council has temporarily prohibited the flying of the Swiss flag on boats plying on the Rhine. A new law, establishing and regulating the right of flying Swiss colours in connection with river navigation, is now being prepared.

The number of newspapers and periodicals published in Switzerland during 1923 amounts to 1860, of which a quarter bear a political character. In the last five years no less than 410 new periodicals have appeared, whilst 163 have discontinued publication. During the war a tremendous demand from abroad arose for Swiss newspapers, but owing to the abnormal exchange position prevailing in the adjoining countries the foreign subscribers have fallen to about half of the pre-war number.

The Auslandschweizertag (Journée des Suisses à l'Étranger) was celebrated at Basle from the 17th to the 19th inst. The Federal Council was represented by its vice-president, M. Musy; an exceptionally large number of Ministers and Consuls from abroad were present, amongst them being M. Henri Martin, from the London Legation. We shall publish in our next issue a full report from the pen of Dr. A. Krafft.

The trade union of tailors' cutters has proclaimed a strike throughout Switzerland in reply to the masters' refusal to accede to a demand for increase of pay.

Col. Ed. Dietler, formerly in command of the Gothard fortifications, died in Berne at the age of 65. Born in Aarberg, he adopted a military career as his profession, specialising in the construction and defence of fortresses.

PEASANT ART IN SWITZERLAND.

A NOTABLE BOOK.

We have all been looking forward to the publication of "Peasant Art in Switzerland" ("L'Art Rustique en Suisse"), regarding which notices have been appearing regularly in this journal.

Our expectations and our anticipations have been fully realised in the beautiful volume before us. A glance through its pages will show how varied are the subjects dealt with and how beautiful are the illustrations and reproductions. If we did not realise how great was the art of our peasants in the mountains and valleys, we cannot fail now to appreciate the heirlooms handed down to us. Much space has been devoted to woodwork and furniture, and this will be welcomed by many. Next we have that all-absorbing and fascinating subjects: costumes, and whether it be the costumes of the moment or the costumes of the past, for them is always to be found a weak spot in every heart. Then we come to textiles and the beautiful illustrations showing the making of our linens, etc., on the looms of the peasant houses. It is to be regretted that this picturesque handicraft is so fast dying out amongst our peasants.

Space does not permit to deal at length with this all-absorbing volume, but we are sure that everyone will find between the covers of this book references made to the especial subjects in which he or she is interested. And again none of us will be disappointed, for each Canton is mentioned and much space is given to their individual characters, customs and arts.

We are afraid that many who did not order their volumes early will be greatly disappointed, as there are very few copies remaining.

C. N. B.

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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KIBERG."

I do hope that the Editor's Appeal in our last issue will have a good result, and that a few of our compatriots will declare their willingness to take over some regular work for our little, but increasingly popular paper. I am perhaps letting out an editorial secret when I state that the help of some compatriot of the French-speaking part of Switzerland would be greatly welcomed, especially in view of my own rather pronounced political views, which, in that case, would find a welcome corrective and would be counteracted. We might then have articles of real interest, because two contributors, writing of the same matter, but from an entirely different point of view, could get up lively and, I trust, very interesting arguments, which, in turn, would obviously lead to many readers taking a much keener interest in current topics and contributing their quota, by letters, etc., to the general fund of discussion and information. If the one cardinal point is remembered that personal antagonisms are never allowed to creep into anything one writes, and that all one's arguments, however distasteful to others, are laid down in good faith and strictly according to one's lights. I really think that one or more of our "welsch" ought to muster up enough courage and zeal to make them decide to offer their assistance.

A Big Franco-Swiss Deal?

The following is to be taken with more than one grain of salt, but the information (?) is interesting as showing what thoughts enter some people's heads. *Daily Dispatch* (7th May):—

I learn from a well-informed diplomatic source that M. Poincaré has invited the Swiss Government to consider favourably the question of a loan to Roumania of £4,000,000. Is this to finance her to arm against Soviet Russia? In return for this France will return to Switzerland the strip of territory between the French frontier and the Swiss frontier which was ceded to France on the outbreak of war for strategic reasons.

M. Poincaré, I am informed, in view of the nearness of the elections, cannot guarantee Roumania the loan she has again asked for, much as she is anxious to assist Roumania for diplomatic reasons.

Besides, my memory may be at fault, or my idea of Swiss Neutrality, but I really cannot imagine Switzerland having "ceded part of her frontier to France for strategic reasons," and that at the outbreak of the late war!! I think the *Daily Dispatch* ought to think again.

Geneva League of Jewish Women.

Jewish Chronicle (9th May):—

The League of Jewish Women in Geneva has addressed to the International Council of Women in London and to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Washington an appeal, drawing

attention to the recurrence of anti-Semitism and to the world-wide sufferings of the Jewish people. The appeal concludes with the request for the passing of a resolution which will bind the National Councils of Women in all countries to fight against the anti-Semitic agitation. It is signed by Mme. Coralie Lebach, President, and Mme. Rosa Abersson, General Secretary of the League.

It is funny how anti-semitism occasionally crops up even in quarters where one would least expect it. We are really still very primitive.

Swiss Customs Tariff.

The Times (10th May):—

Last year there was an actual increase in Great Britain's imports into Switzerland compared with previous years, but a diminution in Swiss exports to Great Britain; the latter tendency is, however, expected to disappear very soon.

The committee of experts who have been dealing with the Customs tariff question have nearly completed their work. Before being submitted for approval to the Federal Council the tariff will be examined by the Departments of Finance and Public Economy. During the course of the year it will be placed before the Chambers, which in June will have to consider the new scheme for provisioning the country with cereals.

The Swiss Customs receipts amounted during the first quarter of this year to 45,000,000 frs., an increase of 4,000,000 frs. on the corresponding period of 1923. It appears from a recent return that the Customs costs per head of population in Switzerland, which are calculated by dividing the value of imports per capital by the Customs receipts, have risen from 4.4 per cent. in 1913 to 8.1 per cent. in 1923.

I wonder whether any of us now living will see the day when customs duties within Europe will be a thing of the past?

Hydro-Electric Developments in Switzerland.

Electrical Industries (7th May):—

The development of hydro-electric stations in Switzerland is dealt with in a report on the economic and commercial conditions in that country to February of this year, by Mr. O. A. Scott, D.S.O., Secretary-in-Charge of Commercial Affairs, H.M. Legation, Berne, and issued by the Department of Overseas Trade. Mr. Scott states that the first stage in the extension of the Wynau Power Station on the River Aare has now been completed. Two groups of turbines have been added, which brought the total available power to 10,400 h.p. This station is to have another 4,000 h.p.

Two generating groups have been erected in the Barberine Power Works (Canton Valais) belonging to the Federal Railways. One group has already undergone trials, and is now ready for service. This station is to be equipped with five groups totalling 68,000 h.p. The Barberine Works, together with the Vernavaz Power Station (Canton Valais), the construction of which will be begun shortly, will form a two-stage group equipped for a total of 170,000 h.p. A huge storage lake at a height of 6,000 feet above sea-level and containing 40,000,000 tons of water, held by a dam 900 feet long, will supply the necessary power.

Work on the Waeggithal (Canton Schwyz—140,000 h.p.) and Chancy-Pouigny (Canton Geneva—43,000 h.p.) power stations is reported to be progressing satisfactorily. The latter station is expected to be completed in 1924.

The Lungern Power Works (Canton Unterwald—18,000 h.p.) are to be extended shortly to 32,000 h.p. As soon as economic conditions improve, the Bernese Power Company proposes to build a three-stage station in the Oberhaslital (Bernese Oberland) which will supply 213,000 h.p. A project for the utilisation of the River Albigna in the Canton Grisons has been submitted for approval.

I got such a shock a few weeks ago when travelling over the Bruenig. I was looking out for the pretty Lungernsee, but to my amazement found it lower down the valley than before and with horribly steep and regular banks. The real, or rather former Lungernsee was dry and ugly to look at. I now hope, having read the above paragraph, that the increase in h.p. contemplated will necessitate a still larger storage of water, thereby filling up again the old Lungernsee, which would restore one of the chief beauties of that valley.

Swiss Railway Electrification.

A few weeks ago I drew attention to this phase of railway development in Switzerland, and the following information will, I think, be of great interest to many. *Modern Transport* (10th May):—

The only section of the Swiss Federal Railways opened to electric traction in 1923 was, according to the report of the Department of Overseas Trade, the Lucerne-Zoug-Zurich line, which is 55 km. long and was inaugurated on March 5th. The opening of this line brought the total length of the electrical sections of the system up to 412 km., made up as follows: Iselle-Brigue-Ston (75 km.); Berne-Scherzlingen (34 km.); Chiasso-Lucerne (225 km.); Arth-Goldau-Zoug (16 km.); Immensee-Rotkreuz (7 km.); and Lucerne-Zoug-Zurich (55 km.). The Sion-Lausanne section (92 km.), which was to have been completed in the autumn, was not ready by the end of December, as a result of difficulties experienced in obtaining part of the overhead equipment. Trials were, however, carried out between Martigny and St. Maurice in December, 1923. It has now been proposed to operate the equipped section Sion-St. Maurice (46 km.) provisionally, pending the completion of the entire section, which is anticipated very shortly. The section Lucerne-Olten (56 km.) was opened to electric section at the end of January last.