

The Swiss watch-making industry

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ment; and unless the question to be decided admitted of being clearly and distinctly put, confusion might arise in the minds of the electors. The successful working of the system depends on the standard of education and intelligence among the people; and the wisdom of employing it in countries like India, where the great mass of the people are illiterate, while caste and religion cause sharp divisions among them, would be doubtful. In politically advanced countries like Britain, the United States, or the great Dominions the case is wholly different. The need for the Referendum in the United States is intensified by the practice of electing large numbers of candidates on one "ticket" for particular electoral areas, which is confusing in many cases. Where Proportional Representation has been adopted there is also cause for confusion, and a Referendum on important questions is very desirable, with the object of clearing the air of extraneous issues. Where a simple system of elections prevails the need is less urgently felt; but, on the other hand, since by the operation of the Parliament Act passed in 1911 one House of Parliament is given a disproportionate share in the power of passing legislation, it is by no means surprising that many should be inclined to put forward the Referendum as a corrective to a state of affairs involving no small risk from hasty law-making. If it is not found possible before long to restore to a reformed House of Lords the power of dealing with legislative measures in a more effective way than at present, the question of establishing the Referendum to deal with them will certainly assume greater importance than at present. It is not an urgent one at the moment, but may nevertheless be pushed into prominence by unexpected developments."

Pro Juventute Stamps.

The *Daily Telegraph* (Dec. 20th) gives the following description of this year's charity stamps:

"The children's stamps have become a popular feature of each year's new stamp issues. Switzerland introduced them in 1913 as a means of raising funds for child welfare work, and a number of other countries have followed since the war.

The stamps in most cases are issued in time for the Christmas and New Year mails, and are extensively used on envelopes and cards of seasonal greetings. In Switzerland alone about ten millions are sold each year, and as each stamp, in addition to its postal franking value, is sold at a supplement of one or two sous, a substantial sum is gathered in for the "Pro Juventute" Foundation of the Swiss Société d'Utilité Publique.

This year's series inaugurates a new theme, with attractive reproductions in correct heraldic colours of Swiss towns. Hitherto we have had the arms of the cantons. On the 5 + 5 centimes, violet, red and black are the arms of Lausanne; on the 10 + 5c., green, black and red, bears the arms of Winterthur, and on the 20 + 5c., carmine, black and yellow, the arms of St. Gall. The highest value pays tribute to the memory of Jean Henri Dunant, the virtual founder of the Red Cross Society, the centenary of whose birth occurred this year. The stamp, 30 + 10 centimes, blue and red, bears his portrait."

And here is a

Winter Sport query taken from *Punch* (Dec. 19th):

"I have been reading with interest a considerable quantity of free literature descriptive of the delights of wintering in Switzerland. While the information given is both extensive and alluring, details regarding one very important feature appear to be lacking, and it occurs to me that possibly you can set my mind at rest.

Years ago, before the War, the St. Bernard dog was a deservedly popular figure of Alpine romance. A visitor to Switzerland who by some mischance happened to be misled in a snowdrift could in those days confidently rely upon being speedily tracked down by a large woolly dog who, having breathed warmly and invigoratingly upon his face, would proceed to serve him with copious draughts of excellent brandy straight from the wood.

I have been a little perturbed by reports which tend to indicate that in recent years this good work has, by reason of the increased expense entailed, added to a temporary shortage of dogs, been somewhat diminished. I have heard of loud complaints from regular customers who had gone to the trouble and inconvenience of getting lost in a snowdrift only to find that they received no attention; they might, in fact, just as well have been in a tea-shop in their own country.

Perhaps you, who have visited the noted Hospice of St. Bernard, can tell me whether the supply of dogs is now sufficient to justify my venturing among the loftier mountain ranges. One can, of course, carry one's own brandy-flask, but it seems a pity to incur this expense should the local service now be restored to its former highly commendable efficiency. One should, I think, always show an intelligent appreciation of picturesque native customs."

THREE "ALPINE" SPEECHES BY THE SWISS MINISTER.

We have secured the tenor of the speeches which our Minister has lately delivered at the Banquets of three different London Alpine Societies and we are sure they will interest our readers.

III.

The third speech of the series was delivered by our Minister in reply to the toast of "Our Guests" at the Annual Banquet of the Ladies' Alpine Club at the Great Central Hotel, on December 12th.

M. Paravicini said that, whatever may be the merits or demerits, both real and imaginary, of a diplomat accredited to the Court of St. James', the honour to speak at the Ladies' Sporting Club was a rare one. As far as he was concerned, this was a first experience and he could only say that, after what he had heard and learned—and seen—he wished that his job would imply a greater measure of that kind of official activity. (Laughter). Indeed, he could not imagine a more pleasant and, if he might use the expression, more encouraging entertainment, than the hospitality of a Ladies' Society imbued with the enthusiasm for sport. In the case of the Ladies' Alpine Club, that sport was not merely a thing of exercise and skill, such as in a golf or a tennis club; it was a thing of an incomparably higher element, such as utmost determination in the face of risk and supreme courage in the face of danger.

Alpine sport was for Switzerland what hunting was for England. If his country were not such an old Republic, the Swiss would surely call it the Sport of Kings. But Kings had for the last thousand years been too scarce in Switzerland for it to be remembered what their favourite sport was. Anyhow, if he had to give it a symbolic name, that night he would call it the Sport of Queens.

There were still certain people in modern society who adhered to the half-forgotten and pretty well exploded theory of the existence on our planet of a so-called weak sex. Now, the Ladies' Alpine Club was one of the institutions which dealt continually crashing blows to that theory, and that was why such old-fashioned people probably watched the Club's development and achievements with feelings of scorn. But men like himself, who knew that there was nothing left in human activity which any man could do better than any woman, could but be convinced of the real value of this Club's efforts and their result. He was sure that what its members did not know about Alpine climbing was not worth knowing. Nevertheless, being a man, with perhaps some of the qualities but surely with all the vices of his sex (Laughter) he would not miss this splendid opportunity of telling female mountaineers all the wrong and stupid things they do when they climb a mountain (Laughter), had he himself the slightest knowledge either of what he was to say or how he was to say it. For, curiously enough, although he was a diplomat, he was very bad at talking about things he knew nothing about. (Laughter.) As it was, they were spared the ordeal of a lecture, and he himself was spared the opportunity of making a fool of himself in the presence of ladies (Laughter).

Only once previously had he had a chance of getting into touch with lady climbers. That was in the summer before last, when he was taking a rest in the lower Bernese mountains. Strolling over the meadows of his wife's Alpine farm, he met a small company of what looked from afar like mountaineers. They were very smartly dressed and equipped, and might have been either very handsome, strong and healthy undergraduates, or rather delicate looking, middle-sized lady climbers (Laughter). He soon found out that they were neither. He let them pass and he found out—too late—that they were cinema stars on their way "to a picture," to be taken nearby and which was to represent a ladies' ascension of Mount Everest and the heroine's fall into the abyss 20,000 feet below (Laughter). That was his only chance of getting in closer touch with lady climbers—and he missed it! (Laughter). He was therefore enchanted to have this second chance, which had proved to be an exceedingly pleasant experiment. He was delighted to have been selected to present the thanks of all the guests for the reception which had been given to them by the Ladies' Alpine Club and its distinguished President, Miss Osborne, with such perfect hospitality and irresistible charm (Cheers).

CITY SWISS CLUB.

CINDERELLA DANCE

HOTEL METROPOLE, NORTHUMBERLAND AVE.,

Saturday, JANUARY 26th, at 7 p.m.

Tickets at 12/6 (incl. Supper) may be obtained from Members of the Committee.

THE SWISS WATCH-MAKING INDUSTRY

The figures for the Swiss trade in watches during the first nine months of this year can be compared with those of the very best years. During these nine months 15½ million timepieces and 3,800 cwts. of separate parts have been forwarded to foreign countries, amounting to a total value of 200 million francs. This result closely resembles that of 1925, which was very favourable on account of the impending rise in import duties in Great Britain. Of the 59 countries mentioned in the customs statistics, 49 had increased their imports! A rare result which does honour to the energy of a first-class company of manufacturers. It should be remembered that but 6 years have passed since the Swiss watch trade experienced an extremely serious crisis. The speed with which this industry has recovered is astonishing.

The United States still remain the most important market for Swiss watches. This country alone has bought two million watches in Switzerland for the lump sum of 28½ million francs. In spite of this fact, however, exports on this market have considerably decreased this year owing partly to customs duties (on motor clocks in particular) and to the presidential elections. With regard to the elections, the authorised papers of the watchmaking industry state that the result of the election of President Hoover will certainly be the stabilisation if not the aggravation of the protectionist policy pursued by the United States for the last ten years. The German market, on the other hand, is opening up for our watches increasingly, in spite of new duties, and shows marked improvement during the whole of the year. This may be looked upon as a sign of the recovery of purchasing power in the whole of Germany and also of the confidence with which our best makes inspire our customers beyond the Rhine. Great Britain follows Germany closely in the importance of its purchases, which have also increased in the course of this year: 2.3 million watches and parts, for 16.7 million francs.

In addition to these three markets, which alone absorb one-third of Swiss production, there has been a very slight advance in Japan, a striking increase in Italian imports, and growing export trade to China, which has again become an interesting market, as well as a renewal of exports to France. In short, the Swiss watch trade has for some months been passing through a period of great activity: the factories are in full working order, workers are in great request, and there is no more talk of unemployment. Even the most famous factories have some difficulty in finding sufficient workers. The two great centres of this trade, La Chaux-de-Fonds and Biemme, are competitors in energy and the spirit of enterprise. The slight decrease in the marking of watch cases in precious metals (it would scarcely be possible constantly to keep up the maximum) will not prevent this year from counting as one of the best in the last twenty years.

In spite of full and busy days, the heads of the watchmaking industry are finding time to organise their profession by degrees. The exportation of rough models and separate parts *chablonnage* has been limited, the immediate result being that various agreements for study have been signed and enforced by the industrial organisations, under the auspices of the Federal Public Economy Department, which has played a very beneficial part in this delicate matter. Thus certain harmful excesses of industrial individualism and of the spirit of competition will be neutralised for the good of seriously organised factories, and, we may add, of seriously-minded importers in all countries.

—S.I.T.

OLD FOLKS' CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON AT THE FOYER SUISSE.

A most remarkable and unique gathering was held on Friday, the 21st December, 1928, at 12-15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C.1, under the Presidency of the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Paravicini, the Hon. President of the Foyer Suisse Trust. The House Committee acted as host to all the old folks and compatriots, and had invited some 60 of the fathers and mothers of the Swiss Colony in London, all over 60 years of age. Unfortunately only 27 people were present, most of the absentees being unable to come on account of ill health. An exquisite five-course luncheon was served by Mr. Meyer and his staff, and was very much enjoyed by everybody. Then came the coffee, fruit and a variety of home-made Swiss Christmas dainties, and the warmth of a true and real Swiss Foyer atmosphere was fully realised. The Swiss Minister expressed this when he rose to address those present with a few cheery words. He thought this gathering offered him "a marvellous indemnity" for his being unable to spend Christmas in the homeland. He also said he made it his duty to keep in touch with everything Swiss in London and found this his first chance to come into close touch with the earlier Swiss generation. He thanked them all for their splendid record and legacy of high esteem left in the country whose hospitality we enjoy so lavishly. With a hearty handshake, Monsieur Paravicini wished everyone health and happiness for the coming Christmas and the New Year. The social hour after the luncheon was cheered in a