

Railway electrification in Switzerland

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CHATEAU d'IF.

Who does not keep in a corner of his memory the deeds of the famous hero of whom we used to read and dream when we were young, Alexandre Dumas' Count of Monte-Cristo, for many years a prisoner at the "Château d'If?"

This old stronghold, which is more or less in ruins and has in the course of time acquired a legendary character, is now threatened with demolition. During the war, the ancient fortress, on one of the small islands outside Marseille, was a splendid observation point for the discovery of German submarines. The French government has now decided to place "a few cannon" on the island, no doubt for the purpose of establishing a secure defence for the port of Marseille. This of course cannot be done without damaging the present structure in one way or another.

Those who have been piloted by one of the many small boats, which do the short sea trip of about one hour between the "Vieux port" at the bottom of the "Cannebière" and the primitive landing stage, where you disembark (which usually means being lifted out by a sturdy Marseillais or risking to fall into the water by walking on a narrow plank), and who have been rewarded afterwards by being shown over the ruins, where the cell of the famous Count is still shown, will be sorry if another spot of historical and romantic associations is to disappear.

RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION IN SWITZERLAND.

The introduction of electric operation of the Oerlikon-Schaffhausen section a year ago marked the conclusion of electrification of the principal sections of the Swiss Federal Railways.

The beginning dates back to 1907, when a special electric traction department was created whose duty it was to study all problems of power supply connected with a comprehensive scheme of electric traction, including the acquirement of concessions in respect of water-power. In 1913 a project was formulated for the electrification of the section between Erstfeld and Bellinzona, the system proposed being single-phase a.c. of 15,000 v. and 16 2/3 cycles. A credit of 39,000,000 francs for the construction of the stationary plant was approved in November, 1913. The first contracts had been prepared for tender on the outbreak of war, which, however, caused an interruption of all preliminary arrangements until the autumn of 1915, when it was decided again to vote credits in the construction budget for 1916 for the purpose of electrification.

A definite decision in February, 1916, in favour of the general adoption of single-phase a.c. of 16 2/3 cycles on the recommendation of the Swiss Electric Traction Investigation Commission finally made it possible in that year for preparatory steps to be taken in placing contracts. About the same time, in view of the scarcity of coal, it was decided to electrify the section Bern-Scherzigen (32km), current being drawn from the Bernese power stations, and to extend the Simplon three-phase system from Brig down the valley of the Rhone to Sitten. Electrical operation of both sections was started in July, 1919. In the meantime the coal scarcity had, in consequence of the war, become really critical, and the difficulty in procuring coal even at prices 6 1/2 times those of pre-war made the electrification of the railways appear a political and national necessity. It was therefore decided in 1918 to electrify the whole of the railways. The programme was divided into three groups: 1, 1,128 route km. to be electrified by 1928; 2, 601 route km. to be electrified during the succeeding ten years; 3, the balance to be electrified by 1948.

By the end of 1922 306km. (single-phase) had been electrified, to which had to be added the extension of the Simplon three-phase system previously mentioned to Sitten and which included the Simplon Tunnel. From the very beginning electric traction proved its advantages. In addition, it became an urgent necessity to convert the unemployment benefits then being paid out into productive wages. In 1923, therefore, it was decided to accelerate electrification and to vary the 1918 programme so that not only those sections comprised under the first group would be electrified by the end of 1928 but also those sections which under the programme were not to be electrified before the year 1933.

The total electrified route length of the Swiss Federal railways at the present day comprises, therefore, 1,666km., which is 58.1 per cent. of the total normal-gauge network of 2,868km. Of this 1,666km. 953km. is double track and 713km. single track. Including private railways, narrow gauge, and rack railways the total length of the Swiss railway network comprises 5,485km., of which 3,418km., 62.3 per cent., is electrified at the present day. On the basis of official figures for 1927 86.5 per cent. of traffic in ton-kilometers on the Swiss Federal railways is carried on electrified sections at the present day and 84.7 per cent. of the total traffic on the whole of the Swiss railway network. These figures are far ahead of those for any other country.

One of the most striking factors in the economic aspect is the elimination of the yearly im-

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port of 600,000 tons of coal of a value to-day of 22,000,000 francs. In addition, of the total capital of about 674,000,000 francs provided for electrification only about one-fifth was applied to the purchase of material from abroad, the balance of 540,000,000 francs remaining in circulation in the country.

The economies are not easy to arrive at, as the steam-operated railways, with which the electrically operated have to be compared, are not in being at the same time. It has been calculated, however, that the following economies have resulted:—

	Francs.
Coal	22,200,000
Personnel	18,100,000
Water, lubricants, rent of coal wagons, maintenance in tunnels	1,600,000
Maintenance costs of locomotives	5,900,000
	47,800,000

(Reprinted from *Manchester Guardian (Commercial).*)

BORIS.

By MUTZ.

Tsar Boris, des Koburger's Sohn,
Ist nun seit langen Jahren schon
Nach einer Gattin begehrlieh.
Doch Politik und Religion,
Und auch der wackelige Thron,
Die Sache machen beschwerlich.
Dollprinzessinnen hat es schon,
Die gerne trügen eine Kron,
Und fänden's nicht zu gefährlich.
Bulgaria jedoch sagt: "Nein,
Pur sang soll unsre Königin sein!"
Und die sind geworden spärlich.
"Warum," frag ich, "tut er nicht kund
Sein Herzeleid dem Völkerbund?"
Der würde gerecht ihm werden,
Denn er bezwecket, wie man sieht,
Auf all und jeglichem Gebiet
Der Menschen Glück ja auf Erden.

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