

A bad world

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LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The death is reported from Zurich of M. R. Hess, Professor at the "Töchterschule" at the age of 67. M. Hess was for many years editor of the "Schweizer Stenographien."

Mme. S. Orelli, a *doctor honoris causa* of the medical faculty at the University of Zurich, has celebrated her 90th birthday anniversary on the 27th of December.

Professors Fritz Fleiner and Dr. J. Jacques Hess of the University of Zurich will retire on the 15th April, 1936. — Dr. Hans Brun, "im Bergli" a well-known surgeon has been nominated titular Professor of the University of Zurich.

BASLE.

Dr. H. David-Grossmann, from 1897-1910 member of the cantonal government has died at the age of 80. Dr. David was a member of the National Council from 1899-1908; he was for 8 years Vice-Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation.

Walter Dück, a student, and Jacob Griedler, a teacher, both of Basle, were caught by an avalanche on the St. Gotthard. M. Griedler managed to extricate himself and reach Realp, but M. Dück has not yet been found.

GENEVA.

Mrs. Barton, who died in Brussels last month, has bequeathed her home, Villa Lammermoor, on the shores of the lake at Geneva, to the Swiss Confederation. The Federal Council has accepted the bequest, which was made on condition that Villa Lammermoor and the grounds should not be split up and that the beautiful trees should be cared for and preserved.

VAUD.

Dr. P. Demiéville, Professor at the University of Lausanne has celebrated his 80th birthday anniversary.

THURGAU.

The death has occurred in Frauenfeld of Dr. Adolf Brodbeck, a noted dental surgeon, at the age of 69. Dr. Brodbeck was made a *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Zurich in 1934.

AARGAU.

M. E. Trachslor, Manager of the Swiss National Bank at Aarau has retired from his post.

FRIBOURG.

Alfred Chuard, from Montet, who has been arrested under suspicion of having tried to poison his parents, — the father having since died, — has confessed to the crime.

GRISONS.

Two skiers, Mr. Guggenheim and his wife, of Zurich were buried under a mass of snow, which suddenly collapsed on them on the Piz Nair, near St. Moritz. Mr. Guggenheim managed to free himself, but when he succeeded in rescuing his wife she was dead, artificial respiration being applied in vain.

A BAD WORLD.

(ENGINEER 20, 12, 35.)

It is not often that we report in our pages the speeches of the chairmen of foreign companies to their shareholders. But the address which Dr. Schindler delivered at the annual meeting of the Oerlikon Company in Switzerland a few weeks ago deals so much more with the industrial economies of the whole world than with the immediate affairs of the company that we give a translation of it practically in its entirety. The author is well-known, even in this country, as an exponent of strong, but common sense views upon world economics, and as a confirmed opponent of more than moderate import duties. In this address he surveys briefly, simply, but effectively, the leading economic movements which have taken place since the war — and condemns them all. He speaks, of course, as a member of a nation which has suffered exceptionally by the depression in international trade and by the repressive policy which has been adopted and developed by countries obsessed with an extravagant desire for nationalism. But it is unnecessary to make much allowance for the effect which the plight of Switzerland must have had on his views. No doubt he would have been silent had Switzerland been prosperous, yet, nevertheless, there is scarcely an impartial economist who will deny the fundamental truth of any one of his statements and only a few, perhaps, who will not share his regret that the conditions of international trade and of less reliance on the State, which existed in pre-war days, are no longer to be found.

If we could imagine a perfectly intelligent being with unlimited power to effect his will taking into his hand the control of the economics of all nations, could we not say with considerable safety that he would not do a single one of all the things that are now done? His object would be to make the whole world act together in accord

for the benefit and welfare of all, and he would condemn a system of nationalism which, by its egoism, must, as Dr. Schindler foretells, in the end destroy the contentment of all. Would he not stand amazed at the sight of any nation of the world restricting, almost to the point of prohibition, the purchase of goods made by other nations and, in consequence, the ability of those nations to purchase its own products? Knowing that money is only profitable whilst it is in circulation, he would be moved to laughter or anger by restrictions which prevent the transit of money between nations. He would listen with attention, but impatience, to the plea of all nations that the economic condition resulting from the depression had obliged the imposition of exceptional measures, but he would surely add that any nation which planned for its own good even if it damaged its neighbour was pursuing a false path. All this is, in fact, the substance of Dr. Schindler's argument, and, as we have said, we believe that no unbiased economist will quarrel with it. Indeed, there will be general agreement with the principle whilst there is a general agreement to disregard it. "I am convinced," says Dr. Schindler, "that we have reached the limit of what can, in the long run, be borne, and have even exceeded it. ... We must not allow ourselves to be led deeper into the morass through illusions of State help. We must rather strive to recover free intercourse in trade and to bring to an end the restrictive economic system; we must aim at stable currencies, at economy in industry, and in the sphere of public administration, and finally, at a policy of long-term trade agreements with moderate tariffs, in spite of the outcry of opposing interests. There is in the long run only one effective means of promoting exports — that is by facilitating imports. It is only when industrial countries are prepared to buy from the agricultural countries the surplus production of the latter and the agricultural countries to take, in return, the products of the industrial countries, that sound economic conditions can be restored throughout the world."

There is a resemblance not very remote between the industrial conditions of Switzerland and Great Britain; both have owed in the past their prosperity to their export trade, and both suffer by anything that hampers the free movement of that trade. In one sense, we suffer and are suffering more than Switzerland because our great mercantile marine was, and still is, in great part rendered idle by the determination of every country that counts on the globe to restrict imports, and, as far as is possible, to satisfy by its own efforts its own requirements. Admittedly, many of them, this country included, have been forced into that policy by the acuteness of unemployment, but it is at least questionable whether the very means which have been adopted almost universally to increase employment have not checked it by the restriction of international trading. Happily, there is no economist in the world who does not recognise that unscalable tariff barriers are a disadvantage to every one, and there are, therefore, always some grounds for hoping that when another World Economic Conference is held means of lowering them, and thereby of facilitating that free flow of trade and money upon which the true prosperity of all nations depends, may be found. Dr. Schindler's clear-cut description of the reactions of present world economic movements may help to open the road to that reformation.

VOYAGE DE SAUSSURE HORS DES ALPES.

(Par Charles Gos. 1 volume in — 8 couronne avec 8 illustrations horstexte reproductions de gravures de l'époque, br. fr. 3.75, rel. fr. 6.25. Editions Victor Attinger, Neuchâtel.)

Tournant le dos aux "glacières de Chamouny" et aux Alpes, un homme, le baromètre à la main et le marteau du géologue en poche, descend pensivement vers les douces plaines d'Italie: c'est Saussure, Horace-Benedict de Saussure, l'illustre savant genevois, l'homme du Mont-Blanc. ... Mais cette fois-ci, Saussure n'est pas équipé pour la montagne. Mare-Auguste Pictet l'accompagne, et les deux amis voient bientôt surgir dans le lointain ensoleillé les horizons méditerranéens.

Séduit par le pittoresque imprévu de ce voyage hors des Alpes, M. Charles Gos s'est complu à suivre le gentilhomme-montagnard (ce mot charmant est de Sainte-Beuve) dans ses pérégrinations en plaine. Avec verve et humeur, il nous raconte les multiples aventures qui marqueront les différentes étapes du célèbre auteur des *Voyages dans les Alpes*, en Italie, sur la "Rivière" et en Provence. De Genève à Genève à pied, à cheval, en chaise de poste ou en felouque, Saussure ne cesse de penser au Mont-Blanc. Et si vous voulez savoir comment il faillit ne jamais le conquérir, renversé par un coup de mistral, sur un toit, en Arles, lisez ce récit plein de finesse et de la plus délicate fantaisie.

LEMBO TICINESE.

Un'ondata di gelo è entrata nel mio cervello — ogni idea è trasformata in un ghiaccio: livido, rigido, ostinato, che non vuol sciogliersi in un scorrevole, chiaro articolo per lo "Swiss Observer." Per fortuna che non devo vivere con il ricavo del sudore della ... mia penna, starei allegra! E se fossi un reporter di professione, temo che le mie notizie arriverebbero ben rancide e ricoperte da uno spesso strato di muffa, ai lettori! Ma lo "Swiss Observer" ha una ricca messe di interessanti articoli, così che non ci perde nulla se manca il mio... tutto al più chi ne va di mezzo è la Posta ... che perde l'affrancazione per un mio scritto ... non scritto! mentre la ferrovia, beata lei, se ne va via più leggera, senza "tanto" peso ... Povera ferrovia! quando penso a lei, un certo qual senso di melanconia mi prende. ... Così generosa, così servizievole (non badiamo, via, ai suoi numerosi "sbuffi" ...) e sta così malaccio! E anemica ... anemica ... anzi la Radio l'altro giorno, descriveva le sue condizioni come quasi tragiche, nonostante i continui, enormi sforzi dei suoi capi per salvarla. Non bastano le comitive portate dalla "Migros" con il suo Piano Olbergiero (che ha funzionato in modo lusinghiero), non bastano le riduzioni invernali che permettono di viaggiare dal sabato al lunedì a prezzo ridotto; riduzioni sui riduzioni ... ma! sfido qualsiasi matematico a sciogliere questo problema: "date continue riduzioni dimostrando aumento." Se si riducono le entrate, come aumentarle? Va bene! Si fa per invogliare la gente a viaggiare, e se molti viaggiano, anche a prezzo ridotto, si arriverà a un guadagno ... ma la gente preferisce starsene dov'è ... e allora?

E poi, ecco che tra capo e collo, arrivano impensate, grosse spese che servono a disorganizzare ancor di più la cassa delle Ferrovie Federali. E valanghe cadono qua e là, sulle linee ferroviarie, ne intralciano il servizio, richiedono lavoro di sgombero, sorveglianze straordinarie... come quella caduta giorni or sono tra Osogna e Biasca, che per un vero miracolo non fece vittime. Una "soffice palla di neve" che interruppe il servizio ferroviario, obbligandolo a deviare, a mezzo autovetture, da Osogna, via Tragna, a Biasca e viceversa, per diversi giorni — e che per poco non travolgeva un treno ed un casello. Purtroppo altra, caduta nel Locarnese, dai Gradiccioli, sorprende una pattuglia di guardie di confine e faceva una vittima; a Vogorno un giovane, andato alla ricerca di capre, veniva travolto da valanga ed il suo cadavere è ora gelosamente custodito dalla neve, in un burrone, solo a primavera potrà venir rintracciato — gelido sepolcro per gelida morte! E la neve, così aspettata, così entusiasmata salutata dagli amatori di sports invernali, dai bimbi ... così candidamente innocente, che vien giù quieta quieta, soffice come piuma, che tramuta la natura in un meraviglioso quadro, con tutte quelle sue caratteristiche speciali, con quelle bizzarre forme che imprime alle cose, con quelle tinte azzurro-gioie delicatamente soffuse di rosa, d'arancione; questa neve come sa essere crudele — precipitando con boati sinistri, cupi, all'improvviso ... rovinando tutto, reclamando vittime! Anche la natura, non solo l'uomo, sa essere perversa! Anche la natura sa essere ipocrita ... Neve bella, lieve ... neve terribile, schiantatrice!

E n'è venuta molto quest'inverno. Di solito, da diversi anni, si passava Natale senza neve, ora, invece, ne abbiamo qui una buona dose. Certo che Natale sarà più "in carattere" e le tante cartoline che gireranno per il mondo portando auguri, illustranti paesi avvolti in candido manto, corrisponderanno a realtà ...

I piccoli abeti incominciano a far comparsa in città, nei paesi: entrano di rimpiantito nelle case; attendono di essere vestiti a festa con candeline, con palline colorate, con fili d'oro, d'argento ... I nasini rossi dei bimbi si schiacciano contro i grossi vetri delle vetrine, ove sono esposte ogni genere di ... tentazioni! E quanti sospiri di desiderio, quante lacrime di rinuncia amare ... Quanti piccoli esseri che purtroppo già imparano che le vita è dura, e ingrata! Poveri piccini innocenti che girate per le vie, illividiti dal freddo, dalla fame ... poveri genitori che salutate un altro Natale triste ... accompagnato dalla crisi, dalla disoccupazione!

Natale! Suonate liete, campane! Suonate a festa. Sappiate almeno voi, garrule e argentine, infondere un pò di speranza in anime desolate; rincorate voi chi dalla vita ha solo amarezza ... benedite le lacrime dolorose ... sorreggete chi se ne va, nella vita, con un fardello troppo pesante ...

Suonate a distesa ... per chi gioisce ... per chi piange ... E Natale! Gesù Bambino, nel Presepio, povero, umile, sorride a tutti ... tutti benedice!

E. G. L.

Lugano, Natale 1935.