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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Swiss contribution to the development of Australia

The Swiss National Autumn Fair, in Lausanne, this year included an official Australian Pavilion, and it is interesting to note the part played by Swiss industry in the development of the Australian production of aluminium. It is an important Swiss company in the aluminium industry which is furnishing the installation plans, as well as technical advice, for the enlargement of the Australian aluminium foundry at Bell Bay in Tasmania. As a result of this extension the aluminium production of the plant will increase from 12,000 to 16,000 metric tons per year.

Amazing record by a Swiss skindiver

Some time ago the Swiss mathematician, Hannes Keller, of Winterthur, achieved a world record in free diving, in the Lago Majore, when he dived, with the aid of apparatus of his own construction, to a depth of 510 feet. What was so remarkable was the fact that the descent and the surfacing took only 34 minutes, whereas if the customary means were used the surfacing alone would have taken several hours. It was owing to a special method used for decompression, perfected by Mr. Hannes Keller with the collaboration of a doctor who is a specialist for the respiratory organs, that the Swiss diver was able to accomplish this feat. The principles on which this method is based cannot be revealed until the apparatus has been patented; nevertheless, one can foresee the economic advantages of this invention, which will make it possible for divers, not only to go down to depths of almost 655 feet, but also to remain submerged long enough to be able to effect whatever work is necessary.

Growth of a Swiss industry

The firm of Castolin Ltd., which specialises in the manufacture of material for soldering at low temperatures, has just inaugurated at St. Sulpice, near Lausanne, its new metallurgical plant for special alloys, and also a research centre. The latter comprises laboratories which will occupy more than fifty specialists in the domain of basic and applied research relating to soldering at low temperature.

A Swiss contribution to business techniques

The new instrument for recording dictation, called " Fi-cord ", which is produced by the Swiss watchmaking industry with the precision for which it is famous, represents a valuable contribution to the modern techniques of business. This pocket-size apparatus can be easily held in one hand for purposes of recording, as it measures only 6.3 inches in length, 3.3 inches in width and 1.7 inches in depth. Nevertheless, it is capable of holding reels which make it possible to make a recording totalling thirty minutes. This little instrument is self-contained — its two dry batteries ensure twenty hours of recording — and can be used as a single unit for recording purposes, or it can be provided with various accessories, such as a miniature microphone, a telephonic recorder, etc. When required for transcription the " Fi-cord " is

fitted on to a stand which has a pedal remote control and an earphone; there is also a stand suitable for work in an office, which makes it possible to record conversation or dictation while having both hands free.

Swiss banking participation overseas

A new bank, the " Swiss - West Indies Bank Limited ", is starting operations in October, at Port of Spain, in Trinidad. With a capital of 480 million West Indies dollars, i.e. 1,215 million Swiss francs, this institution will take part in the financing of various development projects in the British West Indies; it is connected with some important groups of foreign banks.

Switzerland sets up a new record

The most important delivery of typewriters ever made to the Government of Ceylon took place recently in Colombo. The delivery was of 400 Hermès Standard 8. These machines go to swell the number of several hundred Hermès which are already being used by the Cinghalese Administration.

International communications anniversary

Twenty years have gone by since the Swiss Administration of Posts, Telegraph and Telephones, inaugurated, at Berne, a direct service for the transmission of telephonic conversations between Switzerland and overseas countries. Until then, all the telephonic conversations between Switzerland and the countries on the other side of the ocean were sent from Berne by wire to radio transmitters in foreign countries, which then proceeded to transmit them by wireless telephony. This system went back to 1928. During the war, Switzerland, which did not possess any transmitting or receiving station, was therefore entirely dependent on foreign stations for her communications with overseas. In 1940, Switzerland's telephonic communications with other countries were completely interrupted. However, she spared no efforts in order to maintain her connections with abroad in an adequate manner. Fortunately, prior to the war, Switzerland had prepared plans for the installation of wireless telephony and of short-wave radio transmission, which necessitated the setting up of a transmitting station (Schwarzenburg) and of a receiving station (Châtonnaye). It was in July 1940 that these stations were put into operation provisionally. This made it possible for direct conversations to take place, via New York, with the entire territory of the United States and with other overseas countries.

Swiss therapeutic contribution

It is a well-known fact that the use of sulphanilamides and antibiotics is not always free from certain disadvantages, these medicines possessing a tendency, through selection, towards developing a resistant strain of bacteria. Antibiotics, moreover, possess the disadvantage of sometimes destroying the intestinal flora useful to the human organism, producing vitamins. In order to remedy such disadvantages, a Swiss firm specialising in the manufacture of medicinal preparations has now created a new preparation, " Comycétine ", which is a successful combination of antibiotics and sulphanilamides, enriched with vitamins, with an antihistamine intended for the prevention of allergical phenomena and with an antispasmodic which prevents intestinal pains. This preparation, which is very well tolerated and which offers a large sphere of action, is recommended for the treatment of all infectious illnesses of the digestive tube.

The number of motor vehicles entering Switzerland

According to the official statistics, some 17 million foreign motor vehicles entered Switzerland during 1959, which represents an increase of 50 per cent in comparison with 1957.

Industry continues to develop in the Valais

The economy of the Canton of Valais needs decentralised industry in order to bring — without creating any vast demographical concentrations — some further resources for its population, which cannot be entirely supported by agriculture. As a result of the efforts of the Valaisanne Society for Economic and Social Research, new industries are being established in the Valais. At Montana a Swiss industrialist and an Italian engineer are building a laboratory for electro-acoustical studies which, to begin with, will give employment to about a dozen persons. At Sion a Zurich firm which manufactures ready-to-wear garments intends to set up a workshop, which will occupy about twenty people, in the spring of 1961; a dozen young girls are already being sent to Zurich, to serve an apprenticeship in the parent firm. At Conthey a firm specialising in the manufacture of precision instruments will begin production next year, and will employ some twenty workers specialised in this branch of industry.

A loud-speaker clock

A Swiss manufacturer has just launched a practical novelty for private use, namely a loud-speaker clock. This gadget consists of a loud-speaker which is equipped with a dial and hands. The case is made of plastic and can be had in various colours. This clock is operated by a dry battery of 4.5 volts, which ensures its running for approximately 8 or 10 months, and can be changed very easily without having to take the case to pieces. A push-button set in the dial makes it possible to regulate the clock. As for the loud-speaker, it can easily be connected with a radio set, by means of two contact plugs, and it is provided with a volume control. This practical apparatus is made so that it can either be placed on some piece of furniture or hung on the wall.

A new Swiss polishing process

Some metal pieces which are produced in large quantities have to be subjected, prior to their utilisation or to some subsequent work done on them, to a high degree of polishing, which scrapes them and removes all impurities from them. A firm in Horgen has invented a new process for the accomplishment of this work, which it has called " rotolisation ". The metal pieces to be scraped, cleaned and polished are placed into metal or wooden drums or barrels, which are lined with rubber, where they come into contact with an appropriate chemical product, together with small balls made of a very hard mineral substance, which are calibrated very exactly and the diameter of which varies, according to requirements, from two to forty millimetres. As a result of the rotary movement of the drum, these balls come into contact with all the parts of the metal pieces that have to be cleaned. This " rotalisation " brings a number of important advantages to the metallurgical industry, among them safety in use and economical efficiency.