

The Outlook

Volume 147

October 26, 1927

Number 8

THE WEEK

Europe Combining Against America

EUROPE is gradually forming lines for a test of economic strength with the United States. The latest evidence of the tendency is a powerful Franco-German combination in the chemical industry. A similar agreement lately concluded between Great Britain and Germany now joins the three strongest European Powers in a trust the far-reaching effects of which cannot yet be fully estimated.

The chemical accord follows upon the completion last year of a Continental iron and steel association. And Great Britain, not a member of the iron and steel group, is part of the new chemical organization. Into it the present members propose to bring Italy and Switzerland also, making it the strongest unit of its kind in the world. It is to deal in dyestuffs and fertilizers.

Both the chemical and the iron and steel trusts aim ostensibly at greater economies and more efficient production. But it is no secret that they plan to pool resources, apportion and restrict sales in European markets, fix prices so far as practicable, and go aggressively into the South American and Far Eastern and other markets in which the industry and trade of the United States has won a new position since the war.

The French move to triple and quadruple tariffs on American products, while granting special favors and low rates to Germany in exchange for like concessions, was another evidence of the same trend in Europe. And, although France has agreed to return to her former duties on goods from the United States pending the discussion of a new commercial agreement, the significance of her attitude is none the less clear, and understandable.

Europe is facing a formidable economic force in America. Since the war there has been no doubt that Europeans recognize it. As fast as they can, they are preparing to regain and safeguard as much as they can of the place they formerly held. The result may be to break

down the tariff barriers of Europe, unify the Continent more rapidly than anything else could, and increase its production and buying power. If it does, ways to adjust European and American interests can be found, and the United States may have cause to welcome a development which some Americans are viewing with alarm.

Henry Ford as a Rubber Grower

WHILE there may be a difference of opinion as to the prospects of rubber growing in the Philippines and in Africa, there is none as to the Amazon Valley. Brazil is the native home of the rubber plant, and the possibilities of extending production are almost unlimited—given time and capital.

Henry and Edsel Ford have both. They have accordingly obtained a concession for an enormous tract of land (three to four million acres) on the Tapajos River, in the State of Pará, Brazil. This is far up in the Amazon Valley and is watered by tributaries of the great river. To develop it means establishing settlements, insuring sanitary conditions, and an immense amount of preliminary work. Most of the land is virgin jungle.

It will be interesting to watch the two vast experiments in systematic rubber growing, one to be carried on by Harvey Firestone, the other by Henry Ford, the former in Liberia, the latter in South America. The two men are friends of long standing, and both are immense consumers of rubber for automobile tires.

The rubber situation has changed greatly since the Stevenson restriction plan was announced by the British Colonial Secretary five years ago. This plan proposed to reduce exports from British rubber-producing colonies when prices fell and to restrict production at the same time. American consumers of rubber regarded this as a threat, and one result has been to promote all this American activity with a view to our own future supply. Another unlooked-for result of the Stevenson plan has been that

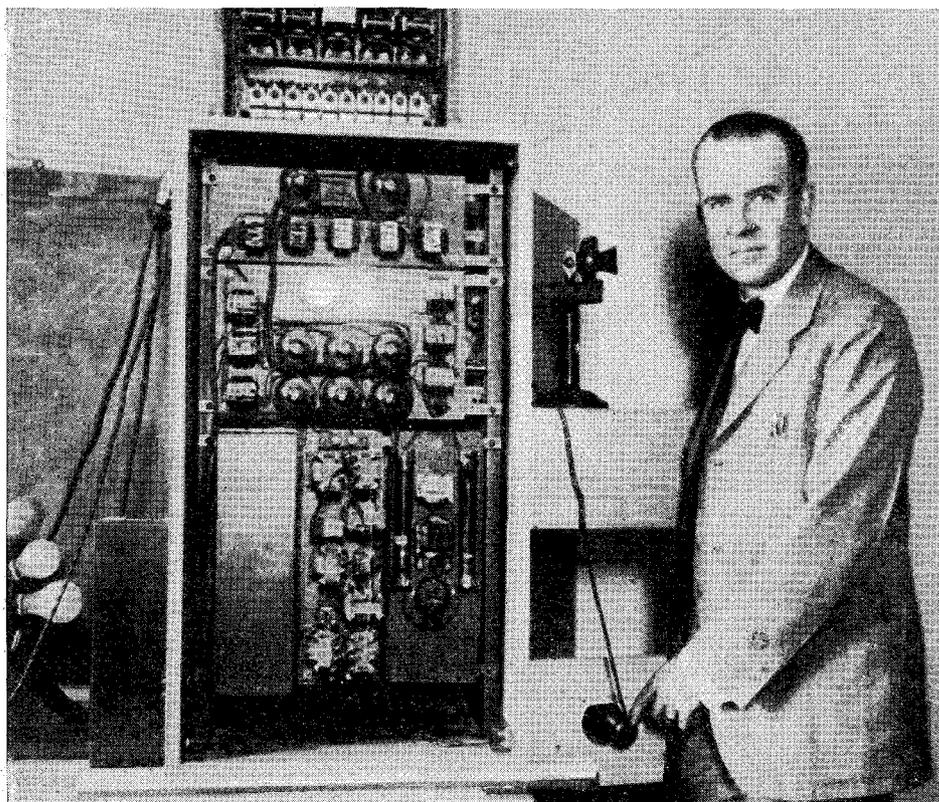
the world price of rubber has fallen instead of rising, despite artificial advances in the price of the output of the British Indian possessions. Already the Firestone Plantations in Liberia have got beyond the test stage and will be an actual producer in a very few years—beginning probably on a small scale three years from now. The Ford experiment has plenty of financial backing, and it is fair to hope for large results in time. Thus the Stevenson attempt to “rig the market” in rubber has balked its own end.

We are not likely to have to give up our automobiles for lack of rubber to make tires.

The Televox Arrives

TO control distant machinery by means of prearranged sounds transmitted over the ordinary telephone Mr. R. J. Wensley, an engineer in the employ of the Westinghouse Company, has just perfected an interesting piece of apparatus, called the “televox,” which apparently does about everything but think. When the public read in some of the newspapers that this apparatus would permit a housekeeper at her club to call her own servantless home on the telephone, receive an answer from the televox installed there, ask it to connect her with the oven on her electric stove and start the oven heating, then order it to switch her to the furnace, ask the furnace how the fire was and order the televox to close the drafts, blame could hardly be laid with justice if the statement elicited an incredulous smile. Anyway, one asks, how much practical good would such an obviously complicated apparatus actually be in the average case?

The new televox will do all these things and more; it will do just about as many tricks as a hundred-thousand-dollar circus dog, but that is not what it was primarily invented for. Of much more prosaic nature but greater economic worth is its ability to control certain kinds of distant machinery, especially unattended electric power substations, a point which will be most fully



Keystone

AN EMPLOYEE THAT IS NEVER LATE OR ABSENT
The new "mechanical man" and R. J. Wensley, who perfected it

appreciated by those in the electrical industry.

How the Televox Works

TUNING-FORKS constitute the key to the televox. Set up a row of tuning-forks ranging over, say, half a dozen octaves, and sing some note. One, and only one, fork will respond by taking up the vibration—the fork of corresponding pitch. The same phenomenon may be produced by singing into the strings of a piano. When the distant telephone call is made, the televox at the other end, previously attached to the telephone there, automatically lifts the receiver, connecting the caller with a series of tuning-forks. The operation is too complex to detail here in its every step, but the essential point is that when the caller sends over the wire the exact notes required, by means of a pitch pipe (or, if he has a good sense of pitch, he may sing them), the forks will vibrate in such a way that the desired operation is performed. The performances require far more current than the telephone will furnish, hence relays of the type used in radio (vacuum tubes), and in turn less delicate relays, are actuated. By this invention a man seated at an ordinary telephone in Oshkosh could call up a dumb piece of machinery in Kalamazoo and set it to work, regulate it, control it,

and stop it. The facetious will see in this a capital means for theatre-going parents to control the baby in the crib by telephone until their late arrival. It is a fact, however, that just as a stunt the Westinghouse engineers in their laboratory have refined the televox to such a degree that it will open a heavy door to the vocal call of "Open sesame" and to no other sound or sequence of sounds.

A Hoax as an Object-Lesson

DR. DOROTHY LOGAN has learned that a hoax may be a boomerang. A hoax is almost always a poor form of joke, and usually it is the last thing in the world to be of any educative value.

Dr. Logan was impressed with the idea that some of the Channel-swimming feats were humbugs, or frauds. So, just to show how easy it is to fake records, she framed a fraud herself, and after her claim to have beaten Gertrude Ederle's time had been accepted as genuine and preparations were afoot to present her with a \$5,000 prize, she "blew the gaff," in the old-time thieves' slang phrase, and admitted that her wonderful swim was a pure fake, with little swimming and plenty of assistance.

The hoax might have been a serious affair for its originator if she had not

had the intelligence to leave an explanatory affidavit behind her when she went out for her little dip in the Channel. Suppose some one else had got the true story in the papers first! It is to her credit that she has exempted Gertrude Ederle and Mrs. Corson from her intimations of fraud or receiving undue assistance. Now she will be attacked only by those she didn't name as innocent.

Poor Dr. Logan has been solemnly rebuked by everybody, and admits that she is sad and sorry. Precious few have the sense of humor that enables them to relish being hoaxed. Nevertheless it is admitted that hereafter Channel-swimming competitors must have reliable official chaperonage in their swims.

Perhaps the reason why some of the contestants were not watched by judges or newspaper men was that the public had become altogether indifferent to this form of athletic competition. The Channel, the public feels, has been crossed sufficiently by men and women, mothers and non-mothers. Give the poor Channel a rest!

Women's Week in the Air

THE adventures and misadventures of women aviators occupied a large share of public interest during the middle week of October.

Ruth Elder, an attractive public entertainer, frankly out for personal and professional publicity, is a pilot who has had at least more experience at airplane controls than Levine. With George W. Haldeman as expert and navigator, she gayly and courageously took off on a flight from New York to Paris for a course which, if completed, would have been the longest oversea flight (about 3,500 miles) from America to Europe. She hoped also to win the honor of being the first woman to cross the Atlantic in a plane. As it was, the American Girl, bearing Ruth and George, did, we believe, beat the over-the-water distance record.

The attempt at this time of year was dangerous, to put it mildly. When far out at sea, after the plane had been buffeted by storm, Ruth and George had to climb out on the exterior plane to release fuel and thereby counteract the weight of sleet—the same trouble that bothered Lindbergh. A feed pipe broke, and Ruth and George were forced to descend. By a chance of the kind that people call miraculous (as was the rescue of Hawker, the first to try the