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HOME NEWS

Negotiations for simplifying the passport formalities are proceeding between the French and Swiss Governments.

The French Government favours total abolition of visas and is preparing proposals in that sense for submission to the Federal Government.

* * *

Ex-Federal Councillor F. Calonder, appointed High Commissioner by the League of Nations to settle German-Polish differences arising out of the League of Nations decision regarding the new frontier lines, has left Kattowitz for Oppeln, where he will consult with the three inter-Allied representatives. During his stay there he will also inspect several Upper Silesian industrial concerns, after which tour of inspection M. Calonder will proceed to Warsaw and Berlin, to confer with the respective Governments.

* * *

The Sixth Swiss Industries Fair will be held in Basle from April 22nd to May 2nd, 1922. The progress of the Fair since it was reorganised in 1917 is illustrated by the fact that in the latter year there were 831 exhibitors occupying an area of 65,000 square feet, while in 1921 the exhibitors numbered 1,054, necessitating an increase of available space to 220,000 square feet.

* * *

As a result of an agreement between the French and the Swiss Postal authorities, letters from Switzerland to Great Britain can now be despatched by Air Mail. The service is daily, Sundays excepted. Ordinary and registered letters destined for this service must be marked: "Air Mail Paris-London" and must have Swiss postage stamps affixed to cover the ordinary letter rate fee, added to which will be a surcharge of 25 centimes for every 20 grammes or fraction thereof. The maximum weight accepted will be 450 grammes per letter or postal package conforming to letter rate regulations. Contents such as money or valuables will not be accepted for air mail transit.

* * *

The Federal Post are issuing new booklets of stamps at 4 francs each, containing 5 stamps of 5 centimes, 13 of 10, and 12 at 20; a charge of 5 centimes is therefore made for this convenience; whereas the British Post Office exacts no charge for its stamp booklets, presumably covering production costs by revenue from advertisements which appear on the booklet covers and interleaved between the stamps.

The Swiss National Bank is offering prizes totalling 15,000 francs for new designs for fifty-franc notes. The competition is open to all artists and industrial art designers of Swiss nationality at home and abroad. Full particulars of the conditions governing the competition may be obtained from Department II of the Swiss National Bank in Berne, or in foreign countries from the respective Swiss Legations or Consulates. Sketches have to be submitted direct to the National Bank in Berne by March 31st, 1922, latest.

* * *

Following an old custom, the Municipal Council of Zurich addresses every New Year's Eve letters of congratulations, accompanied by monetary gifts, to the oldest citizens resident in the city.

This year's recipients were: Konrad Suhr (92) and Anna Barbara Kollhop-Brandenberger, who was born in August, 1822.

* * *

The Federal Assay Office gives the following returns for hall-marking gold, silver, and platinum articles during the past year.

A comparison with the figures in parentheses, which are those for the preceding year, emphasizes graphically the severe drop of trade in these industries:—

Gold watch cases, 356,409 (1,005,437).

Silver watch cases, 611,308 (1,359,605).

Platinum watch cases, 4,036 (5,861).

Gold, silver, and platinum plate and articles of jewellery, 888,364 (1,724,414).

* * *

The universal economic crisis also acutely affects the exports of Swiss cheese. In 1913 the total output reached 80 million kilos, of which 45 million kilos were absorbed for home consumption, while the rest was exported, realising about 70 million francs. Germany and Austria, before the war, imported nearly 15 million kilos, but are to-day out of question as consumers owing to the hopeless exchange conditions prevailing in those countries, while France, whose imports in 1913 totalled seven million kilos, is also only in the market for quite a negligible quantity. Exports to America, which in the same year accounted for 9 million kilos, have also fallen very considerably, and several other countries, which between them imported nearly 10 million kilos, can to-day not be counted on, unless the disparity in the exchange is to some extent counterbalanced by a reduction in the price for the Swiss commodity—the only means of reviving exports and improving the otherwise gloomy outlook in the Swiss industry of milk products for 1922.

* * *

Exchange Incongruities! A Swiss traveller returning by the Viennese Express indulged in a bottle of wine during his sojourn in the dining car, for which luxury he paid 500 kronen. Having alighted at the Swiss frontier station St. Margarethen, he promptly sold the empty bottle

to the damsel at the station buffet for 50 Swiss centimes, which, converted into Austrian currency, represented 700 kronen, so that he was 200 kronen in pocket by having drunk a bottle of Tirolean wine.

* * *

The Philatelist Society of Geneva will hold an International Exhibition for Stamps from the 3rd to 12th September, 1922.

* * *

In the week December 25th to 31st 513 cases of scarlet fever had to be registered in the city of Geneva. In consequence the reopening of the Municipal schools had to be postponed.

* * *

Basle's influenza epidemic involved over 1,000 fresh cases from January 1st to 7th. Fortunately, the symptoms of the illness prove to be of a mild nature.

* * *

Charles Genillard, director of the Villars Palace Hotel, also the founder and president of the association "Pro Lemano," met with a tragic end, succumbing to a fracture of the skull, caused by the fall of a block of ice from the terrace of the hotel, the clearance of which he was supervising at the time.

* * *

On Monday evening last the 10 o'clock train from Berne to Schwarzenburg dashed into a van which showed no lights, at the level crossing near Moos, instantly killing the driver and his three horses.

* * *

The employees in a large textile factory at Ziegelbrück, who were called upon to decide between a 52-hour and a 48-hour week, have decided, by a four-fifths majority, to return to a 52-hour week so as to avoid a reduction of wages.

* * *

A watchmaking factory at Gaillard, near Geneva, has been completely burned down, and the damage amounts to £30,000. There was no water available for the firemen.

* * *

Although the world situation has not yet begun to improve, "the downward tendency may almost be said to have ceased," states the current number of the monthly statistical bulletin of the League of Nations. It is noted that prices have risen lately in Japan, India, Switzerland, and probably in France and in other countries where the circulation is in a less healthy condition; but they are still falling in the United Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries, and in the United States. A favourable indication of the improvement, it is pointed out, has been the increase of production not only of coal, but also of iron and steel.

SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED.

E. Steiner, J. Schmid, W. Frick, L. Chapuis, A. Renou, H. Pfirter, H. Veyrassat, M. Ernst, Miss L. Naef, Ch. Haag, J. Graf, G. A. Heinzelmann, H. Epprecht, J. B. Brutsch, F. O. Walty, G. Engesser, J. G. Sigg, H. Durler, E. Robert, W. E. Gattiker, Mrs. C. Müller, F. Graf, Schweizerbund, R. Hangartner, F. Th. Freund, F. E. Caspar, S. Jeker, M. Pachoud, E. Ziegler.

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NOTES & GLEANINGS.

All the reports from the winter resorts seem to indicate that this year's season will be an excellent one. The largest contingent of visitors is supplied by the English, who are not only favouring St. Moritz, at which place some of the hotels are so crowded that bookings have been refused, but also Murren, Grindelwald, Gstaad, Engelberg, Wengen, Montana, Davos, Klosters, etc. The New Year's Eve festivities and fancy dress balls, arranged by the various hotels, are in no way behind the attractions offered at this season by our fashionable West End restaurants. In the midst of these gaieties money is of little consequence, stock-taking follows the dénouement, and Schiller's words: "Einen Blick nach dem Grabe seiner Habe sendet noch der Mensch zurück" are brought back to our minds by a correspondent in the *Sunday Times* (Jan. 1st) who complains about the high prices. He spent a few days at one of the minor resorts in the Engadine and writes:—

"My hotel bill for four days totalled 174 francs 30 cents—£8 14s. at present exchange. The food itself was very unappetising, monotonous, more or less tough, and ill-served. One had to take the best of someone else's leavings.

I was informed by the hotel-keeper that Government war restrictions on food were still in force, but I have since heard from other sources that the restrictions have been removed long since, and that the food at the Palace, St. Moritz, is up to its pre-war reputation at a minimum price of 25 francs per day.

I would say, however, that at the Railway Station Hotel at Chur below, the food was excellent, a 6s. table d'hôte dinner being served with dishes specially cooked for each guest."

* * *

The *Motor Cycle* (Dec. 29th) comments on the decision to again run the International Six Days Trials in Switzerland, which offers the finest facilities in the world for a motor cycle test. The event will take place from August 3rd to 9th and, starting from Geneva, will take the competitors through La Chaux-de-Fonds, the Jura, Laufen, Basle, Zurich, Klausen Pass, St. Gothard, Altdorf, along the lake to Lucerne, Berne, Interlaken, Meiringen, Grimsel Pass, Martigny, Château d'Oëux, Jaun Pass, Zweisimmen, Aigle and back to Geneva.

* * *

The Ex-Empress Zita's visit to Switzerland is somewhat uncharitably referred to in some of the English papers. It is even asserted that none of her children require an operation, and if the trouble were appendicitis such an operation could not be indefinitely postponed without endangering life; it is hinted that the journey is connected with certain crown jewels, kept in a safe of which the Ex-Empress alone has the key.

* * *

"Topsy-Turvydom" is the title under which the correspondent of *The Westminster Gazette* (Jan. 6th) reports his recent discoveries about exchange pranks in Switzerland. According to this authority there is too much gold in Switzerland, and the Mint has been so overwhelmed that it is unable to cope with the coining. He proceeds:—

"These avalanches of gold are coming mainly from Stockholm, but it is not stated how they originally reached the Swedish capital. It is clearly cheaper for anyone in Stockholm to send gold to Switzerland than to the United States. Not only is the cost of transport and insurance less, but there is less loss of interest, for the time of the journey is so much shorter. Experts calculate that there is a net profit of 30 Swiss francs on every kilo of refined gold sent from Stockholm to Switzerland, and a kilo of such gold apparently yields 3,390 Swiss francs, after deducting the cost of transport, insurance, and coining. This, however, is the case only if the gold is coined at once, and does not lie a long time in Switzerland without paying any interest.