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HOME NEWS

The Federal Council has handed to the French Government last Monday the official note, declaring its inability to ratify the Zones Convention, and expressing the hope that this will not adversely influence the relations between the respective frontier districts.

Federal Councillor Motta has presented a report, setting out the steps which have been undertaken officially in order to disengage our country from the adverse economic influences caused by the occupation of the Ruhr.—The loss incurred by the Swiss Federal Railways as a consequence of the decrease in traffic, higher coal prices and cancellation of contracts for the delivery of material required for the electrification, is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of ten million francs.

The total amount spent in Switzerland up to end November, 1922, for the purpose of combatting and mitigating unemployment is, according to calculations made by the Federal Labour Office, 453.2 million francs. To this grand total the Confederation has contributed 254.4 million, the cantons and municipalities 181.5 million, and factory owners 17.2 million francs.

The Federal Council is contributing an amount of Frs. 50,000 for the erection of a wireless telegraph station at Lausanne.

Since March 1st, the Swiss Legation in Vienna has taken under its protection nationals of the principality of Liechtenstein who reside in Austria.

The staff of the special police for the control of foreigners in Switzerland has, during the last twelve months, been reduced from 143 to 35.

According to official figures just published, 5,722 Swiss abroad have been assisted and repatriated, at the expense of the Confederation, during the year 1922. Germany, France, Austria and Italy are the countries in which some of our nationals fared badly. The total amount so spent in last year's budget amounts to about half a million francs.

16,722 automobiles and 5,902 lorries were registered in Switzerland on December 31st, 1922; the number of motor cycles was 9,387 and of those with side-cars 2,243.

The accounts for 1922 of the canton of Vaud record a deficit of nearly 7½ million francs, which, however, is 2.7 million lower than the budget anticipations.

On a second poll, Brenno Bertoni (Liberal) and Antonio Riva (Conservative) were elected representatives of the canton Ticino in the Federal States Council. The former secured re-election with 10,292 votes; Antonio Riva, who polled 7,650 votes, is a newcomer, although in previous years he has been member of the National Council. He is a lawyer in Lugano and prominent in cantonal political life.

Three proposals were submitted to the people of the canton of Aargau last Sunday: one, reducing the salaries of teachers by 10 per cent., was confirmed by a large majority, whilst the other two (increase in property tax, and issue of a 10 million francs loan) were carried by a small majority only.

In the canton of Zurich a project, sanctioning the appointment of women as officials of the law courts, was rejected by 59,890 against 17,018 votes.—The citizens of the town of Zurich have ratified a new agreement with the "Tonhalle" company, in accordance with which the yearly subsidy will be increased from 20,000 to 30,000 francs.

A popular vote in the canton of St. Gall endorsed a new decree, reducing the number of judges from seven to five and making other changes in the legal procedure, which will result in a yearly saving of Frs. 15,000.

AN INTERESTING LECTURE ON SWITZERLAND

Those who have followed the course of commercial lectures at the City of London College have wondered that, amongst the many countries dealt with, Switzerland was not included. This omission has now been rectified, and we are pleased to announce that Dr. Pierre de Wolff has consented to lecture on March 26th, and will deal with the history and development of Swiss commerce, industry and finance; their relations to the English and Colonial market will come under special consideration. The Chair will be occupied by the Swiss Minister.

The lecture will be delivered at 5.15 p.m. on Monday next at the City of London College, White Street, Moorfields, E.C. 2, and is free to the public.

Swiss Watches continue to hold their own.

The present year has so far added new laurels to our watch industry. We have already reported the results of tests, published by the Washington and Neuchâtel observatories, but the figures published now by the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington demonstrate anew that the Swiss watch industry, in spite of unfavourable conditions, is able to maintain its high standard of workmanship. Both, first and second places have been secured by our compatriots, and the following are the points awarded to the different Swiss firms:—Zenith Watch Co., London and Le Locle, 96.8 points; Paul Ditisheim, La Chaux-de-Fonds, 96.4 points; Louis Brandt et Frère, Omega Watch Co., Bienne, 96.0 points; Longines Watch Factory, St. Imier, 95.8 points; Fabriques Movado, La Chaux-de-Fonds, 95.6 points.

It will be noted that the highest number of points (96.8, awarded to the Zenith-Watch Co.) is only one-tenth of a point below the world's record of 96.9, held by Paul Ditisheim, of La Chaux-de-Fonds, who on the present occasion is second with 96.4.

Concours International de Réglage de Chronomètres.

(Communicated.)

Le concours international de réglage de chronomètres institué à l'Observatoire de Neuchâtel, en 1923, à l'occasion du centenaire d'Abram-Louis Breguet, commencera le 25 avril pour les chronomètres de marine et le 25 mai pour les autres chronomètres. Des fabricants de chronomètres de plusieurs pays ont déjà annoncé leur intention de participer à ce concours.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Switchgear.

The *Engineer* (March 9th) gives an abridged specification of a British patent, granted to Brown, Boverie & Co., of Baden, Switzerland, for an Improved High-Voltage Switch Plant.

Telephones of Europe.

Readers of *The Swiss Observer* will remember the efforts, made by our Colony in London, to obtain greater facilities for telephone calls to Switzerland. According to *The Times* (March 10) an International Conference was to be held last week at Paris, to "discuss the possibility of extending, on a commercial basis, the present radius of long-distance calls on the international trunk lines."

The conference has been called by the French Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, and the countries to be represented will include France, England, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. It is expected that the experts will limit their preliminary consultation to an examination of the engineering problems of direct communication, and to a review of the volume of traffic which could be looked for if increased facilities were provided. Further conferences will be necessary before a practical scheme can be put into operation.

International telephony as yet is in its infancy, but business houses in London have already realized the value of the existing system, and a few people have actually anticipated the romantic potentialities of a Continent completely linked up by telephone. Firms with European branches in cities like Paris, Berlin, Brussels and Milan can by a system of retransmission of messages use the trunk telephone lines to keep in daily touch with practically the whole of Western and Central Europe. Using telephony alone, or in some cases a combination of the telephone and the telegraph, they can beat the ordinary telegraph services by many hours. Rome, for instance, can be reached by two relays at Paris and Milan; Riga can be 'called' through Brussels and Berlin; the Balkans, or at any rate Jugos-

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Slavia, through Brussels, Berlin and Vienna; Madrid through Paris. An urgent need for certain information was recently conveyed to Riga by telephone, and a reply was received in London within six hours.

This exploitation of existing facilities is only made possible by the employment of staffs in the relaying centres, and involves skilled organization and initiative. Occasions arise when an operator, say, in Milan, finds the Paris line choked with messages or put out of action by a storm. His care would be to find an alternative route, and he would probably work through Geneva, as Geneva can transmit direct to London.

The complications are beyond the resources of the average commercial man, and telephonic communication across several countries will not, and in fact cannot, be generally adopted until the Governments of the European nations consent to the establishment of some kind of unified system which will abolish the need for retransmission. Under present conditions each country operates its telephones as a local business, and although the nations may be mutually interested, they must, when their own boundaries are reached, hand over the business to others.

"*Caelerum censeo*" that international frontiers will have to go, if progress has to be achieved!

Spahlinger Treatment.

Our readers will surely be very pleased to read the following, which appeared in the *Sunday Chronicle* (March 11th):—

"The article of Dr. Leonard Williams, in the *Empire Review*, on the Spahlinger treatment is quite illuminating. The Swiss bacteriologist has now tided over his financial difficulties, and we will have the serum in this country before long."

"Wives Domesticated by Order"

was the alluring title of an article in the *Sunday Pictorial* on March 11th, and the wives referred to as being so domesticated were "Swiss wives." The writer of that article, Henry Devon, has quite a number of flattering things to say about Switzerland and its population, and the scheme about which he writes with such gusto evidently pleases him. Alas, we have to report a letter, written by our friend, Dr. Paul Lang, to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* (March 9th), which dispels the pleasant illusion:—

"Sir,—In your issue of March 3rd you publish an article on compulsory domestic training, in which you mention that Miss Edith Sellers speaks in the *Cornhill Magazine* about a Swiss Bill which, she says, 'in some cantons will soon become law,' and which would compel all girls to have one year's compulsory domestic service before they reach the age of twenty."

May I be allowed to draw your attention to the fact that no such Bill is in preparation, either in the Swiss Confederation or in the Swiss cantons. The origin of the article is probably the so-called 'Motion Waldvogel,' which stipulated for civil service of one year's duration for every young citizen of either sex; in the girls' case it might, of course, be called domestic service. This motion was adopted by the National Council some time ago, and the Federal Council will therefore report on the matter, but whether it will do so in an affirmative or negative way will be seen when the report, for which there is no time limit prescribed, will be issued. No cantonal authorities are, to my knowledge, planning any similar measure, and the optimism of social reformers in this country, who like to look upon Switzerland as a pioneer in compulsory domestic service, is for the time being anticipatory.—Yours, etc., Paul Lang, Secretary of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique."

All the same, we must confess, the idea of getting our girls to "do their bit" in their particular sphere, has much to recommend it.

A Swiss Contralto in London.

Another Swiss artist has achieved a notable success in London. The *Morning Post* (March 12) refers in the following terms to the recital given by Mlle. Lily Zaehner:—

"A Swiss contralto, Mlle. Lily Zaehner, gave her first London recital at Wigmore Hall on Thursday night, and immediately had her audience interested. Her voice is easily produced, and she gives it freely to an eager style of expression that makes the most of a song. If her interpretation of the old French 'Une Perdriote' was laboured, the fault lay as much with the modern harmonising expert, who had laid his heavy hand on melody and rhythm. Mlle. Zaehner attacked the 'Zigeunerlieder' of Brahms with the good effect of an enthusiast. Mr. Harold Craxton was at the piano."

Our congratulations!

For Philatelists—A Suggestion.

We imagine it must be a very trying time for philatelists to keep up with the flood of new postage stamp issues, not to mention the expense. On the other hand, collecting stamps is probably just now a very good, if not the best, way of assimilating political geography, unless, owing to the colossal *embarras de richesse*, one is driven to specialise, in which case there is, of course, the danger that one gets to know where one country is situated and is apt to forget all about the others. There ought to be a special Faculty for Philatelists, with special lessons in the preparatory schools, to train the budding collector along proper lines of procedure. In our young days, stamp collecting was a comparatively easy matter, if one had the good sense to exclude rigorously Central and South American States, but now—? We are not sure whether it would not be better almost to train the young ones to collect foreign currency notes instead of stamps, the former being often very much cheaper—and larger, so that an album can be filled much more rapidly! Any readers, wishing to get rid of such collections, please communicate with the Editor! Our own vans will collect, free of charge; distance no object.

According to the *Daily Telegraph* (March 8th)—"Switzerland is to have a new series of aero postage stamps, consisting of six values in three striking designs by the artist Karl Bickel, of Zurich. They are expected to be ready this month, and are intended primarily for use on the air service connecting Geneva-Zurich-Nuremberg, which is to recommence on May 1, but the stamps will also be available for use on air mail matter, originating in Switzerland, for transmission over the other international lines."

Swiss National Fortune.

We read in the *Financier and Bullionist* (9th March):—

"According to the latest report of the Banque Populaire, the Swiss national fortune, which at the end of the war attained 48 milliard francs, is now reduced to about 40 milliards. It is considered that 8 milliards have been lost in four years, owing to the general economic crisis and the collapse of the exchange in different countries."

According to latest advices from home, the worst seems to be over now. Industries are reviving to some extent, unemployment has been greatly reduced, although still an anxious problem, and confidence generally is on the increase. The international situation is watched with the greatest anxiety in Switzerland, as its effects reflect directly and indirectly on our country's economic resources. More than ever it is necessary that everybody should work with a will and especially that none of us should forget the motto of our fathers: "One for all—all for one." We know that, as long as we live up to that motto, we cannot go far wrong.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Von alten Leuten.— Im Adressbuch der Stadt Zürich werden jedes Jahr die 20 ältesten Stadtbürger und -Bürgerinnen auf einem besondern Blatt namentlich aufgeführt. Zurzeit ist die älteste Bürgerin die Witwe Kollhopp, geb. Brandenberger, die am 8. Oktober ihren 100. Geburtstag feiern kann. Sie ist volle sieben Jahre älter als der älteste Stadtbürger, K. Suhr. Das Durchschnittsalter der Senioren beträgt 88 Jahre, 11 Monate und 23 Tage. (Bund.)

Der Poltergeist von Weil.— In Weil spukt es bei Tage und bei Nacht. Vielen Baslern ist sicherlich das "Stapflehus" bekannt. Dieses grosse, vor Jahrhunderten erbaute Haus beherbergt eine Familie, in deren Schoss es nicht mit rechten Dingen zugeht. Der neunjährige Sohn schläft in einem Zimmer, aus dem zuweilen fürchterliches Gepolter zu hören ist. Sobald sich der Bub ins Bett legt, verübt der Poltergeist sein Unwesen. Der Pfarrer wurde herbeigeholt, der Lehrer, andere, Ungerechtere, kamen herbei; alle Wände wurden abgeklopft, sogar der Boden wurde aufgebrochen, um eventuell den Geist aus seinem Schlupfwinkel zu vertreiben. Alles umsonst. Dem Geiste wurden Fragen gestellt, die er prompt beantwortete, wie: Welches Alter hat der Bub? Neunmal donnerte es durchs Haus. Zähle mal bis zwölf! Zehn heftige Schläge erklangen aus dem Gebälk heraus. Auf den Irrtum aufmerksam gemacht, folgten noch zwei Schläge. Die Einwohnerschaft von Weil ist natürlich in

zwei Parteien gespalten; die eine misstraut der ganzen Geschichte und sieht in dem jungen Burschen den Poltergeist; die andere, unter Führung des Pfarrers, ist der Ueberzeugung, dass das schwächliche, nervöse Kind auf keinen Fall einen solchen Lärm verursachen kann. Ueberdies hat man ihn wiederholt scharf bewacht. Sonderbar ist nur, dass der Poltergeist nur in Tätigkeit tritt, wenn der im Bett liegende Bub die Hände unter die Bettdecke legt. Sonderbar, höchst sonderbar! (National Zeitung.)

Eine neue Attraktion Berns.—Es ging die Rede, unsere Bären drunten im Bärengraben seien nicht mehr fortpflanzungsfähig geworden. Sie müssten durch junge Tiere aufgefrischt werden. Als alle Hoffnung auf Nachwuchs aufgegeben war, da geschah das Wunder: Bern kriegte junge Bären, aber was für welche! Steh still, Helvetier, wenn du über den Bärenplatz gehst, und schau dir dort unsere Wappentiere an. Grüne Bären haben wir gekriegt. Die jungen Bären nämlich, dort am plumpen Block auf der schlanken Brunnenssäule. In üppigem Grün blüht und grünt ihr Pelz. Sei es, dass ein Liebender schnell wachsenden Kressensamen, der den Namen seiner Holden verraten sollte, säte, oder der Wind sein Spiel mit den Bären trieb, genug — sie sind grün geworden. Lassen wir dieses Denkmal einer unglücklichen Kunstverirrung verschwinden, sonst lassen unsere Buben im Frühling, wenn das Grün recht schiessen wird, ihre Kaninchen dort oben weiden. Uebrigens würde sich auf dem Platz vor dem Parlamentsgebäude eine Helvetia, aber auch eine andere Statue, ähnlich derjenigen auf dem Widmann-Brunnen, schön ausnehmen. Die grünen Bären kann man auch auf Reisen schicken, um den Weltruf Mutzopolis in der Bärenzucht zu verkünden!

(Berner Tagblatt.)

Das älteste aargauische Wirtshaus.— Das älteste Gasthaus im Aargau, in dem während bald 700 Jahren das Wirtschaftsgewerbe ausgeübt wird, ist der "Sternen" in Wettingen. Wohl um die Wahrheit des alten Satzes auch ihrerseits zu unterstützen — dass, wo der Herrgott eine Kirche baue, der Teufel ein Wirtshaus daneben stelle — waren die Cisterzienser Mönche, welche anno 1227 das Kloster Wettingen gründeten, einsichtig genug, auch gleichzeitig ein Gasthaus zu erbauen. Es ist das der eingangs erwähnte, weit bekannte, von den Kurgästen in Baden viel besuchte Gasthof zum "Sternen." Mannigfach sind allerdings die Umwandlungen, die das Haus in diesen Jahrhunderten erfahren hat. In der "Schweiz, Wirtzeitung" wird der Werdegang dieser früheren Klosterherberge geschildert. Er hat allerdings Interesse, so dass wir mit einem Auszug auch dem Leserkreis der "Neuen Aarg. Ztg." dienen. Ursprünglich lehnte sich der "Sternen" an die schon längst beseitigte St. Anna-Kapelle an und war, wie diese, extra muros, d. h. beide Gebäude befanden sich ausserhalb des Klosterfriedens. Nach alten Bildern zu schliessen, war dieses Gebäude, gewöhnlich "Weiberhaus" genannt, wohlweislich mit dem innern Klosterort verbunden. Es diente hauptsächlich zwei Zweckbestimmungen. Vorab war es Gasthaus für die weiblichen Besucher der Kloster-Insassen. Weil das Betreten des Klosterhofes und aller zum Innern des Klosters gehörenden Räume den Frauen strengstens verboten war, fand die Begegnung und Begrüssung in diesem Hause statt, wenn Mütter und Schwestern die Konventualen besuchten. Sodann diente das Haus dem weiblichen Hilfspersonal, ebenso wohnten darin die Laienschwestern. Dieses Weiberhaus und das ebenfalls schon längst beseitigte Torgebäude, genannt Pförtchenhaus, wurden zweifelhlos gleichzeitig mit dem Kloster, also schon anno 1227, erbaut. Es geht dies aus einer Schenkungsurkunde der Gemahlin des Kaisers Rudolf von Habsburg hervor. Das Kloster ist schon vor 81 Jahren vom Grossen Rat aufgehoben worden; aber das Wirtshaus besteht fröhlich weiter. Trotz durchgreifender Renovationen hat es den Charakter der alten Klosterherberge bewahrt. Böse Menschen könnten daraus den Schluss ziehen, dass trotz Abstammungsbewegung das Wirtshaus festeren Bestand als selbst ein Kloster haben muss. (Neue Aargauer Zeitung.)

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FOYER SUISSE.

The "Foyer Suisse" has now entered into possession of 12 and 13, Upper Bedford Place, W.C. 2. The premises are being redecorated, and every effort will be made to introduce a homely atmosphere and create a Swiss cachet. In the meantime, Mr. W. Meyer has been appointed manager; he is already known to many members of the Colony as the late tenant of the Hotel Bellevue and Bahnhof in Wengen.

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