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HOME NEWS

The conferences held last week between the Federal Council and the representatives of the canton Ticino have resulted in a satisfactory settlement of the economic claims made by the latter. The official communiqué dealing with this matter is reprinted under "Extracts."

A mixed factory commission has been deliberating in Zurich on the necessity for extending the working week to 52 hours for a number of concerns chiefly engaged in the embroidery trade. Under Article 41 of the Swiss Factory Law these firms already enjoy this concession up to the end of the present month, but an extension up to June, 1926, has been applied for. The final decision rests with the Federal authorities.

Dekan Ambühl, who is at present officiating in Lucerne, has been elected unanimously Bishop of Basle and Lugano in succession to Dr. Jakobus Stämmler, who died on April 18th. Bishop Ambühl is 52 years of age and comes from a well-to-do farmers' family in the canton of Lucerne.

A foreman electrician on the Montreux-Oberland railway, named Jules Häger, lost his life through coming in contact with the high-tension current.

Three people were killed in a motor accident which occurred last Saturday (May 30th) near Wangen a.A. In traversing a level-crossing, a car with seven occupants was unable, through some defects in the gear, to clear the rails and was thrown off the track by the approaching Zurich-Geneva express. The driver and two others were able to jump off in time; Frau Beyeler and Herr Julius Birrer, both from Basle, were killed in the smash, whilst a young daughter of the latter died on the way to the hospital. It is stated that the woman in charge of the crossing gates was unaware of the approach of the train, which was a supplementary one.

Jakob Bommer, who, together with his wife, had been for thirty years in charge of the Sântis Observatory, died in Appenzell at the age of 73. He relinquished his duties in 1919 on account of advanced age, and was succeeded by the Haas family, who lost their lives under tragic circumstances in February, 1922.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Les revendications tessinoises liquidées. — La conférence annoncée avec le gouvernement tessinois a commencé mercredi matin. Le Tessin est représenté par cinq conseillers d'Etat, le Conseil fédéral par les chefs des départements intéressés. MM. Musy et Haab ont assisté à la séance du matin; l'entretien a porté sur les questions relevant du département de ce dernier et en particulier sur les surtaxes de montagne. Il paraît probable qu'on s'arrêtera à la solution suivante: pour le trafic des marchandises, les suppléments de taxes seront supprimés complètement. En revanche ils seront maintenus pour les voyageurs. Mais on adoptera un *modus vivendi* permettant aux habitants autochtones du Tessin de bénéficier d'un tarif normal.

Après avoir délibéré encore pendant deux heures mercredi après-midi sur les demandes formulées par le Tessin, les membres de la conférence siégeant à Berne ont déclaré aux journalistes qui les attendaient à la sortie qu'un accord parfait et définitif était établi sur tous les points principaux. Un bref communiqué constatant ce résultat a été publié à l'issue de la séance; il sera suivi de renseignements officiels plus détaillés rédigés par les différents départements.

Il se confirme en particulier que les surtaxes de montagne seront abolies sur le Gothard dans le trafic marchandises à partir du 1er janvier 1926, et qu'on établira un régime spécial pour les voyageurs qui habitent le Tessin. On favorisera en outre, dans la mesure du possible, par des accords spéciaux les industries indigènes du canton en facilitant l'écoulement de leurs marchandises dans le nord de la Suisse. Cet arrangement est en connexion étroite avec un autre point du programme tessinois, sur lequel les C. F. F. auraient également consenti une concession importante: celle de la

rétrocession des forces hydrauliques; on espère que l'augmentation d'énergie électrique disponible contribuera au développement de l'industrie et à la création de nouvelles entreprises qui bénéficieront également des tarifs spéciaux.

Enfin, en ce qui concerne les subsides que la Confédération verse au canton pour l'entretien de ses routes alpêtres internationales, on s'est arrêté à un moyen terme: l'indemnité, qui est actuellement de 200,000 francs, sera doublée: elle sera augmentée également du 100 pour cent pour le Valais, qui touche aujourd'hui 50,000 francs, et les Grisons et Uri qui reçoivent respectivement 200,000 francs et 80,000 francs. Comme ces sommes sont fixées dans la Constitution, on les augmentera par la voie d'un arrêté fédéral muni de la clause référendaire, et l'on évitera de cette façon une révision constitutionnelle.

Ein wertvoller Tisch aus der Abtei Wettingen. — Vor einiger Zeit ist ein reich geschnitzter Tisch, der früher zur Abtei Wettingen gehört hatte und seit etwa fünfzehn Jahren gesucht wird, bei einem Antiquar in Paris zum Vorschein gekommen. Das Landesmuseum hat in Gemeinschaft mit der Gottfried Keller-Stiftung die Gelegenheit nicht vorbeigehen lassen, diesen einzigartigen Gegenstand zu erwerben. Der Bundesrat hat dieser Erwerbung zugestimmt. (Neue Züricher Nachr.)

Eine reiche Gemeinde ist Ammerswil im Kanton Aargau, die für 1924 jedem Ortsbürger 421 Fr. ausbezahlen konnte. (Arboner Tagblatt.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Of course, it's easy to be wise after the event, and anybody knows now that one should have followed Manna. But . . . However, I will not weary my readers with my unfortunate experiences of this year's Derby. Unfortunate really rather in a vicarious sense, inasmuch as my "investment" did not exceed a modest 2/6 each way on Ptolemy. The unfortunate experience was, however, that this much-guarded gee-gee did not allow one of my friends the first sweepstake prize, and thereby deprived me of a share in a *magnum* which had been hinted at in case Ptolemy should win. Result: no headache on Thursday!

Taking things all round, it really seemed on Derby Day as if the gods looked with disfavour upon the event. A beautiful day before, a beautiful day after the race, and a miserably wretched day on Derby Day. A friend of mine who went to the races by train on that day told us afterwards that he would never go to Epsom again on a rainy day. It cost him the train fare, the entrance fee, incidentals, a new hat, ditto overcoat and shoes, which were all ruined by rain and mud (the spats were left in the train on the homeward journey, because they looked simply too awful for words) and he was 30s. down on balance in the betting, although he had got £7 for £1 on Manna. What a day! It is experiences like this "what ought to learn 'em!"

Writing of racing reminds me of the Olympic Games which may be held at Lausanne in 1928, vide the following from the *Daily Express* (25th May):—

I understand that the next Olympic Games will take place during 1928 at Lausanne, because the Dutch Government have refused the necessary money grants.

Consequently the Swiss Federal authorities, after carefully studying the matter, have agreed to organise the Olympic Games, and also offer a financial guarantee. The Mayor of Lausanne has been delegated to make the official offer at the International Olympic Congress, which shortly meets at Prague.

The Invitation to the Alps.

J. St. Loe Strachey in the *Spectator* (23rd May):—

Lately under that somewhat prim heading in 'The Times'—"Telegrams in Brief"—a heading, however, which often covers many interesting things—my eye caught the following:—

"It is expected that the roads over the Simplon Pass will be open to motor-cars on May 21st. This is nearly three weeks in advance of the date usually fixed. This early opening is due to the fact that snowfalls in the Alps were rare last winter."

That may seem to some men a prosaic piece of news. To others and certainly to me it means all the glories and delight of youth in the mountains and woods, the waters and wastes, the fields and floods of a great European landscape. How vividly it recalled to me the whole

magnificent array of the Passes of the Alps and the circumstances in which, as a young man, I crossed them and looked down upon the plains of Italy. In my day—and I cannot doubt it is the same to-day—the thing that the adventurous youth of both sexes wanted to see most was always Switzerland and Italy—to sit upon an Alp as upon a throne, and to see from it in vision, if not in fact, that pageant of beauty, romance and history which is Italy. Let others praise Berlin or Vienna, Christiania or Stockholm, Cairo or Constantinople; we were for Como and Venice via the Simplon or the Splügen. That, I suppose, is why the news that the Simplon is opening stirred my heart like a trumpet. For a very different reason it once stirred the heart of Napoleon. He planned—with triumphant success—the first carriage road across the Alps. Until it was finished his fiery spirit knew no rest. It is said that during the two years or so in which the road was building he was always asking the question, "Le canon, quand pourra-t-il passer le Simplon?" ("When will the guns be able to pass the Simplon?") Till they could do so he felt that he had no hold over Italy.

We have pierced the Alps with half-a-dozen tunnels, and soon shall pierce them with more. But, all the same, the opening of the Pass remains as a great symbol that the door is flung open into Italy and that we may accomplish our springtime desires—the time when, as Chaucer says, "longen folk to gon on pilgrimage." The Whitsuntide holidays are upon us. They combine with the clearing of the passes from the snow, to play us that immortal tune—the invitation to the Alps.

Though this is not the time for making the great ascents, for climbing Mont Blanc, or the Matterhorn, or Monte Rosa, it is a delightful time for what I may call moderate mountaineering. It is the time when the cunning embroidery of the fields of Switzerland is to be seen in its supremest beauty. The gentians, great and small, are springing up as the snow recedes. Only a week ago, in my Surrey garden, I saw that my one remaining plant of the bell gentian had punctually produced its azure flower of joy—the flower whose colour Ruskin compared with the blue depths of the crevasse. It was beckoning me to Helvetic pastures. To my mind the gentians are the best of all wild flowers, but those who like something more luxurious will find them in Nature's vast *parterre* upon the slopes of Monte Generosa. There acres and acres of lilies-of-the-valley scent the air and nod their exquisite heads in "breath of vernal air from snowy Alp."

I have begun with the passes of the Alps and I must finish with them, for they are too often neglected. There is no reason why, because men usually go by tunnel under the Mont Cenis, the Simplon or the St. Gothard, spring tourists should not get out at the base of the Alps and walk over them. This does not necessarily mean keeping to a dusty high road. Along the course of most of the main mountain roads there are traces of the old mule paths. They haunt the new roads like ghosts. When your feet are on the "old way" you are in a mood to think how the men of former days crossed the Alps, for, in spite of their roadlessness, there was a perpetual stream of travellers both ways. Chief among these walking passes was the Great St. Bernhard. Except in the height of winter there were two streams of foot and horse traffic which formed a perpetual procession. Oddly enough, these streams were greater in the Dark Ages than in the later Middle Ages or in the Renaissance, when sea traffic from ports like Marseilles afforded an alternative entry into Italy. If I remember rightly, King Alfred before he ascended the throne of Wessex paid at least one visit to Rome, crossing probably by the St. Bernhard. So did most of our Bishops and Archbishops. Indeed, in the period from about 800 till 1100 our Chief Ecclesiastics thought nothing of riding to Rome.

All good luck, then, to those who are going to take their first view of the Alps and their first view of Italy this year. On some, no doubt, the impression will be entirely ephemeral. For others a world will be affected. Throughout the rest of their lives they will lie awake in London every spring or summer and listen to the call of the mountains of Switzerland and of Italy.

Pope in the "Dunclad" said of the young Englishman on the grand tour:—

"Europe he saw; and Europe saw him, too."

Let us hope that none of those who are going to accomplish their novitiate this year will forget the warning in this line. Europe will be looking at them. Let them determine to give no opportunity to Europe to say that they are a parcel of cads or barbarians whose money may be acceptable, but whose presence is odious. Indeed, let them compel the people of Switzerland and of Italy to say, "These men and women seem to appreciate and love the beauties of our country even better than we do ourselves."

The last sentence might be taken to heart by a good many other nationals who, as a rule, are more odious by their presence than English tourists.

Swiss Public Debt Redemption.

The Times (23rd May):—

The Swiss Federal Government has recently approved the proposals made by the Chief of the Finance Department, Federal Councillor Musy—now President of the Swiss Confederation—with the object of preparing for the progressive redemption of the Swiss public debt—a total of nearly 1,500,000,000 frs. (£60,000,000)—as from 1927, when the first instalment for the redemption of the debt will be included in the Federal Budget.

M. Musy has set up a redemption plan which is burdening the taxpayer as little as possible, and which has still to be sanctioned by Parliament. The Finance Department proposes to devote to that debt redemption, in the first place, the 35,000,000 or 36,000,000 frs. (£1,400,000 or £1,440,000) which are to remain on the annual yield of the Extraordinary War Tax which is to be levied during another period of ten years; in the second place, the sum which will be saved every year on the interest of the debt in consequence of the progressive redemption of the latter. This plan seems to be sound, and if it works out well and no unforeseen circumstances occur, these 1,500,000,000 francs may be fully redeemed by the end of 1964.

The redemption of the Public Debt is likely to have important bearings on Swiss politics, finances and economics, as it will contribute to improving the financial market, especially in regard to the capital needed for the development of agriculture, trade and industry; it will also have a good influence on money rates, as it will give back to the Swiss market the funds it has lent the Government during the past years.

Another Jubilee.

Catholic Herald (28th May):—

Dr. George Schmid, Auxiliary Bishop of Chur, Switzerland, in August will observe the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Bishop Schmid has maintained the most cordial relations with American bishops and priests and with the convents established in that country as offshoots of the communities in his diocese.

After his ordination in August, 1875, the future Bishop was sent to England. There, as professor, his students included the present Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Bourne. For many years he taught in Maria Hilf College in his native land, an institution from which many priests went to America. He was elevated to the See of Chur in 1908. During the war he laboured tirelessly to alleviate the sufferings of its victims. Despite his 74 years, he is surprisingly active.

Bishop Schmid is deeply interested in Church music, and has himself composed a number of selections. He is known far beyond the confines of his diocese and his native land as an outstanding figure among European bishops.

Coal and Electrical Power: Experience on Swiss Railways.

South Wales Journal of Commerce (26th May):

The past year was a favourable one for the Swiss Federal Railways, and the monthly Bulletin just issued by the Swiss Bank Corporation refers to the efforts which are everywhere being made to electrify railway lines. The average cost of electricity per locomotive-kilometre worked out at frs. 1.14 in 1924, as compared with 1.28 in 1923, while the price of coal was only 86½ centimes per kilometre in 1924, against 97 centimes in the previous year. At first sight it might appear that electric traction is more expensive than coal, but the Federal Railways point out that the principal line worked by electricity is over the St. Gothard, where steam traffic was always more expensive than the average, owing to the very steep gradients. Electric locomotives are further pulling heavier and longer trains, and reckoned upon a basis of cost per thousand tons moved, the expense for coal per kilometre in 1924 was 4.20 frs., as compared with 3.87 frs. for electric power. It should be added that electricity permits of greater speed, which is an important factor from the point of view of international transit traffic, and that that the expense of maintaining tunnels is less, while the price of current will gradually be reduced as the progressive electrification of the system permits a better utilisation of the power generated by the various stations.

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Alarmist articles anent the fast disappearing fuel appear from time to time in the press. Electrical power obtained from water-power is likely to last for some time. Even then we are probably only at the beginning of opening up resources. The coal age, the electric age will most likely seem as strange to future civilisations as do to us the stone age, etc. Once we learn to tame the tides, enough horse-power to satisfy most of our needs for power and heat will be found. Another age may even produce a real lightning-tamer. It is computed that one flash of lightning would give enough electricity to provide London for some time. There are some 30—50,000 flashes of lightning on each day of the year, taking the whole surface of the earth, so that once this source is tamed, humanity ought to have a fairly easy time. And that will not be all or the last source of energy. There remains atomic energy. Enough power is supposed to be contained in the tip of one's little finger to produce an enormous amount of power. Well, well, the danger is that these discoveries may be made much too soon, as happened with powder and poison gas, i.e., these discoveries ought to come only when our civilisation or another one have advanced far enough to utilise such discoveries properly. Otherwise, strange and ghastly things may well happen one day.

To Parents.

Dr. C. W. Saleeby writes in the *Daily News* (27th May):—

Many readers request more information about the new discoveries in the prevention of disease by the use of iodine. Let it be explicitly repeated that the patient suffering from goitre must consult a doctor. That is none of my business nor of any honest man who, however highly qualified, does not see the case: for there are many types of enlargement of the thyroid gland, all called goitre, and precise diagnosis must always precede successful treatment.

Our concern is with the capital discovery, the latest great achievement of medical science, that mankind must go back to iodine, and restore that element to its dietary, in order to prevent certain widespread diseases of mind and body. The discovery has been made in the United States and Switzerland. It is now officially applied, on a vast scale in those countries, and also in Ontario and in New Zealand. We have great need to apply it in this country, but official action is still delayed except in the case of two or three progressive and enlightened medical officers of health, such as the late Dr. Sidney Barwise, of Derbyshire, Dr. James Wheatley, of Shropshire, and Dr. F. W. Alexander, of Poplar. But the campaign carried on here and elsewhere has aroused many manufacturers to action, as we shall see.

The theory, and the fact, is that our modern dietary tends to be short of iodine, which is to be regarded as not a drug, but a necessary food, being the raw material required by the thyroid gland in the neck, for the specific manufacture by which it serves body and mind in a host of ways. Iodine occurs in fresh green vegetables in traces. It also occurs in some specimens of wheat, but not in white flour. Dr. F. W. Alexander has had some analyses made, and is making some more for me, which revealed iodine in bran and wheat germ and wholemeal, but white flour is as destitute of it as of vitamins. In any case, iodine is a soluble element, and though the seas of remote ages left much of it on the land when they retreated it tends to be washed away by rain and streams. Even complete wheat cannot supply us with iodine if, as is often the case, the soil on which it is grown is already depleted of this precious element.

When minute traces of iodine are restored to the diet of children, large numbers of existing goitres disappear, and practically no new ones appear, even in parts of Switzerland, for instance, where every school child had goitre. The worst consequence of goitre is the birth, to a considerable proportion of goitrous mothers, of idiotic, deformed and altogether pitiful children, called cretins. There are scores of thousands of cretins in Switzerland now, but it is gloriously reported from cantons where the

iodine-prevention has been in use for long enough that no more cretins are now being born.

In later life, many cases of goitre develop cancer in the enlarged gland. A new and exhaustive study, from the Galton Eugenics Laboratory at University College, suggests that goitre is connected with cancer elsewhere, and that the incidence of cancer in adults may be diminished by the use of iodine.

At Ilkeston, in Derbyshire—the county notorious for "Derbyshire neck"—the public water supply is being iodised (as at Rochester, in the United States). Swiss children now all receive a tiny weekly official supply of iodine, in a special form, "iodostarine" (made by Hoffmann-Laroche, 7, Idol-lane, E.C.3), but they are wholesale and will not supply you or me directly. Iodised salt is very widely used in many countries. In Switzerland the Government wisely arrange that this salt shall be no dearer than ordinary salt. In this country the iodised salts that have been brought to my attention are, for the most part, much dearer than ordinary salt, and I cannot but think that the price might in some instances be reduced. Daily I receive letters from readers who have inquired and cannot be supplied by unenterprising retailers. Pray note, therefore, that among those I have seen, "Iodosal," made by Francis Newbery, Charterhouse-square, E.C., in my judgment, contains enough iodine for our requirements without the intake of an excessive quantity of salt. Chemists and grocers, who have never heard of iodised salt at this date, should emigrate to Spain or the Appalachian Mountains. They really have no place in a progressive country.

So now my readers know where to apply for the necessary dose of "Iodosal."

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