

Home news

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HOME NEWS

The innkeeper Walter Dreyer, of Bümplitz, who by misrepresentation and the forging of signatures had succeeded in swindling nine Bernese banking institutions of Frs. 132,000, has now been sentenced to 3½ years imprisonment.

Dr. Henri F. S. Vuilleumier died at Lausanne on Tuesday, July 7th, at the age of 84. Until 1923, when he retired, he was for 54 years professor of theology at the Lausanne University. At all times actively interested in ecclesiastical matters, he was the sole or joint author of a large number of works dealing with the Protestant religion.

Dr. O. Leimgruber, born in 1886 at Fribourg, has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation.

Two casualties were the result of a motor accident on Thursday (July 9th) near Littau (Lucerne), caused by furious driving. Dr. med. Bill, from Meggen, was returning from a trip with two friends, Messrs. A. Sütz, from Altdorf, and A. Molteni, from Lucerne, both dental mechanics, when at a road turning his car dashed against a stone wall and ran clean over a heavy telegraph pole, which was levelled to the ground. His two companions were thrown out of their seats, the first one being killed on the spot, whilst the latter, Mr. Molteni, escaped death, though seriously injured.

In December last year Collombey (Valais) elected a new municipal council; these elections have been declared null and void by the Federal Tribunal, for the reason that some of the voters, though fully-qualified citizens, only stayed temporarily in the district.

Whilst a confirmed criminal was being sentenced in the Geneva courts to another two years imprisonment in *contumaciam*, he not having actually been arrested, it was subsequently discovered that the man was in court amongst the public, listening coolly to the proceedings; he was able to cross the frontier into safety before his identity was discovered.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Swiss Trade and Tariffs.

Economist (4th July, 1925):—

A Geneva correspondent writes:—Some anxiety is felt in certain Swiss commercial circles as to the future of Swiss trade and industry, and some people even fear that a new economic crisis is close at hand. Last year Swiss exports increased. They left, it is true, an important adverse balance, but the latter was made good by the increasing receipts from the tourist industry, from the export of electric power, and from the foreign earnings of the banks and insurance companies. Moreover, the disappearance of unemployment and the activity shown by all industries was a sign that conditions in Switzerland had become normal again. But since the beginning of 1925 conditions seem to have changed. While the value of exports has gradually decreased since the end of January, the import trade has slackened, and consequently an important drop was registered in the Customs receipts; at the same time, the earnings of the Swiss Federal Railways fell as a result of a decrease in the transport of goods. Exports in April were even lower than in the previous months, the watch-making, condensed milk, chocolate and shoe industry alone recording new progress. Some economists pretend that this depression is due to the fall of the French franc; others say that it is a result of German competition, which is every month becoming more dangerous for Swiss manufacturers. These two causes may partly account for the present depression. But there is the further fact that many countries have set up new Customs barriers: France is revising her Customs tariff; Germany is about to raise her Customs duties; Norway and Sweden have introduced new duties, and all the new tariffs are increasing the duties on articles of luxury, most of

which came from Switzerland. Great Britain is, moreover, reintroducing the McKenna duties, which will seriously hit the Swiss watchmaking, silk, lace and embroidery industries. When one has in mind that Great Britain, the United States (who increased Customs duties some years ago), France and Germany are the best markets for Swiss goods, and that over one-half of Swiss exports go to these four countries, one cannot help feeling concerned regarding the economic future of Switzerland. Even before the new Customs barriers existed, Swiss trade and industry found it very difficult to compete with other countries. This is a consequence of the economic policy pursued by the Swiss Federal Government, whose protectionist measures are in the long run harming trade and industry instead of helping them.

When, after the war, Switzerland began to be swamped with cheap goods imported from countries with a depressed currency, the Swiss industrialists themselves requested the Government to protect them against foreign competition. The Government not only increased the Customs duties, but also prohibited or controlled the import of several products. When the Government found that the new measures were very productive, and might help towards the financial restoration of the country, it made them permanent, and again increased the Customs duties, so that foreign competition is now as little dangerous as possible. But, on the other hand, this increase in Customs duties resulted in a rise in the cost of living (which is now the highest in Europe) and in the price of raw materials; salaries had to be raised or maintained at a very high level, so that the production price of Swiss goods rose accordingly. At the same time, many countries made reprisals on Switzerland by raising their Customs duties or by prohibiting the import of certain Swiss goods. The result was that when the post-war crisis came, Swiss industrial exports were hampered, and industrialists asked the Government to grant them subsidies, which enabled them to carry on and to give a certain impetus to exportation. The present situation is very similar to what it was three or four years ago: higher Customs duties in many countries and the high value of Swiss currency are seriously impeding the development of trade; moreover, Swiss industry is handicapped by the high cost of production, by heavy taxation, and high costs of transport; this accounts for the fact that Swiss products are generally more expensive than others, and that it is now every day more difficult to sell luxury articles such as Switzerland is producing. The only means of helping Swiss commerce and of averting the impending crisis would be for the Government to reconsider at once and thoroughly its economic policy, so as to lessen the difficulties under which Swiss industries are labouring. Instead of revising its Customs tariff with a view to increasing duties by 40, 50, and even 80 per cent., the Government should be bold and wise enough to reduce it so as to bring down the cost of raw materials as well as the cost of living, to reduce the transport taxes on the Federal Railways—which are among the highest in Europe—to reduce taxation, which measures would rapidly result in a drop of the production cost, so that the situation of Swiss trade and industry would be much easier, and that Swiss goods might be sold abroad at a reasonable price. But will the high officials of the Trade Department and Customs understand the urgent necessity of altering their policy? Probably not.

From the above informative article I draw one hopeful conclusion, namely, that by-and-by international trade will get so terribly bad that the various European nations will be forced to unite and to abandon the foolish, armament-supporting tariffs now rampant everywhere. Truly, Europeans are a seemingly hopeless crowd, unwilling to learn, or then too selfish to apply lessons learnt.

NOTICE.

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The Open Road Abroad.

The sweltering process which we are undergoing just now—not a cloud in sight anywhere while I write these Notes!—makes one long for the open road, for the fields and forests, the brooks and rivers, the deep valleys and towering peaks of our native country. Many of us, I dare say, will be on the way by now, many will be counting the days until they, too, will be able to cross the Channel and make for the Alps. Many of us, however, and, alas, my poor brother! see no prospect of such a journey being vouchsafed to them this year and they must perforce be content to read about such journeys and to glean what little comfort they can from such reading. "Rovator," of the *Daily Herald*, 2nd inst., writes:—

Since I wrote last week's "Open Road" article, within sight of the Damma Glacier, my partner and I have covered many hundreds of miles of Switzerland's beautiful country, including the climbs over the St. Gothard Pass (twice), the Furka Pass, the Grimsel Pass, the Jaun, and other lesser-known passes—a bewildering feast of loveliness and wonder.

Of the many friends who have traversed the Alpine passes, not one has given me the faintest impression of their awe-inspiring wonder. The reason is not far to seek—the task was beyond them, and they refrained from the attempt. The northern gateway to the St. Gothard is the quaint village of Hospenthal, itself higher than our highest British peak.

We ascended the day following its opening to traffic this year, and both soldiers and char-a-banc drivers were making trial trips. Near the summit, we had to be hauled out of a snowdrift. In places the road passed through snow walls 10 to 12 feet in height.

On the top of the Furka Pass—nearly twice the height of Ben Nevis—we ran into a snow storm, and reached the summit hotel so cold that we had to thaw our hands round glasses of hot milk before we could drink. Well below the summit there is an ice cave into which the sun penetrates with a ghostly blue light.

From the St. Gothard Hospice, we descended direct to Lugano on the Italian frontier, where the weather was so hot that nothing but bathing was tolerable at midday. The descent southward from the St. Gothard is one of the most interesting on the Passes, the road coming down what is almost a sheer precipice of 3,000 ft. in a series of terraces connected with hairpin bends.

So sharp are these bends that, seen from the upper terraces, the wonderful Swiss char-a-bancs appear to spin round on their back wheels as they negotiate them. This descent is made in the awe-inspiring company of mighty rock walls a thousand feet or more high, and on the edge of these walls, twisting west, north, east and south in bewildering confusion, the road is suspended. On the lower section, the road passes through a deep gorge in which tons of water boils and eddies between gigantic rock-walls with a roar like never-ending thunder. Wild flowers grow in amazing luxuriance—including the wonderful alpen rose.

The Grimsel Pass rises immediately from the foot of the Furka Pass in one of the most impressive road scenes I have yet witnessed. Over gigantic buttresses of rocks, down through deep rock chasms, or terraced on sheer rock faces, roads twist and wind in bewildering tracery in every direction, with the blue, cold majesty of the Rhone Glacier crowning all.

But Switzerland is not all wild passes, and in the valleys there is a rich abundance of growing things. At present, the hay crop is rapidly being harvested, and the fields look as though they had been swept clean with a mighty broom.

The Swiss are tidy almost to a fault, both within and without their homes. I have never seen so many happy and healthy people in so small an area. They love their country, and weak-ends and holidays, children, young men, and maidens, and old folk of 60 years or more, roam together over the mountains in happy contentment.

An artistic instinct prevents them from spoiling their wonderful land with ugly buildings, and even in the towns they have almost abolished the advertisement hoarding from their streets. An abundant and cheap electric supply adds to the general cleanliness of the homes. It is almost like a dreamland of William Morris.

Mr. Spahlinger's "Man in the Next Room."

Evening News (8th inst.):—

Two or three hundred people, it may be assumed (writes an *Evening News* representative) will glance at M. Spahlinger in Piccadilly during