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HOME NEWS

The Federal Council has accepted, with thanks for services rendered, the resignation of Monsieur A. J. Fontannaz, the honorary Swiss Consul at Liverpool; M. Faivre, the Chancellor is at present in charge of the Consulate.

The Budget estimates for 1927 of the canton Geneva provide for a deficit of over six million francs.

The first anniversary of the signing of the pact of Locarno is to be made the occasion of a special celebration which, however, will only have a local character.

The proprietors of newspaper stalls at Swiss railway stations, have formed themselves into an association in order to maintain their independence, and fight against the creation of a monopoly which tends to destroy the individual kiosk holder.

At a conference of wine merchants, held in Berne last week, it was stated that the consumption of white wines in the German part of Switzerland showed a continued decline; it is feared that even with a general lowering of prices it will be difficult for the wine growers to realize their large accumulated stocks.

The central committee of the Schweiz, Kaufmänn. Verein (Société Suisse des Commerçants) has sent a memorandum to the Federal authorities concerned pointing out the insufficiency of existing possibilities to enable commercial students to complete their practical education abroad and suggesting that in the forthcoming Federal Budget a fund should be provided from which the required subsidies may be granted.

The news circulated in the Swiss press last week that Federal Councillor Musy, during a hunting expedition in the Valée de Bagnes (Valais), shot no less than thirty chamois, is now officially contradicted; it is stated, that although he was a member of the party securing this bag he had not slain a single chamois.

The cantonal state treasurer of Glaris, Mathias Hösli, has been placed under arrest, an official investigation of his accounts having brought to light the fact—apart from gross irregularities—that an amount of Frs. 4,550 had been abstracted.

For selling bread under weight, a Bernese master baker has been sentenced to four months' imprisonment and a fine of Frs. 2,000; the shortage is stated to have been as much as 20%.

The Riektunnel between Uznach and Wattwil (Zurich), which is known to harbour deadly gases, was the scene of a dreadful accident last Monday. A goods train, though correctly signalled as having left the Kaltbrunn station, at one end of the tunnel, failed to emerge at the Wattwil terminus. A hand trolley, despatched at once from the latter station, was only able to ascertain that a terrible tragedy had taken place, the smoke and fumes being so dense that the centre of the tunnel could not be reached; though considerably overcome they were able to return, but of the original party of six, three succumbed to the asphyxiating gases. It was in the evening, about eight hours afterwards, that a properly prepared relief gang extricated the train from the ill-famed tunnel and brought it back to Rapperswil together with the bodies of the engine-driver and four guards in charge of the train.

A shocking accident happened last week near Unterägeri (Zurich) when a military aeroplane piloted by Lieut. Mauerhofer from Dübendorf, had, owing to engine trouble, to make a forced landing. In restarting, the plane flew into a tree, turning a complete somersault, without injuring the two occupants; three school boys, however, who were standing near by watching the operations, were hit and killed on the spot. They are all from Unterägeri and their names are Jos. Steiner, Jos. Wilpert and Jos. Ithen.

Road Accidents.—Whilst walking at night time along the road from Wangen to Olten, Ernest Hünziker, a clerk in the Cement Factory at Olten, was knocked down by a motor cyclist, and succumbed to his injuries a few days afterwards in the local hospital.

As a consequence of a motor accident, in which on June 5th near Egghölzli (Berne), three persons lost their lives, Frau Marie Haberer, who was driving the car, was sentenced by the Bernese courts to six months' imprisonment, loss of licence and to the payment of fines and indemnities amounting to about Frs. 85,000; she was found guilty of negligent driving.

For having arranged with a third party to break into his shop at Basle as well as his private residence, and subsequently making a claim of Frs. 30,000 under his insurance policy, M. Hügin, a stamp dealer of Birsfelden, has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

The unfortunate Fire Brigade rehearsal in the Gonzenbergwerk when in February last four miners were killed through coming into contact with the high tension line, has had another sequel. The commandant, R. Mühler, whom the district court at Werdenberg had exonerated from blame, has now been convicted of manslaughter by the St. Gall courts and sentenced to a fine of Frs. 400.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

League of Nations.

To wind up this subject for this season, the following resumé taken from the *Daily News* (Sept. 27th) may be opportune; it also shows the feverish hurry shown by the delegates in getting back to their own countries:—

The Seventh Assembly of the League of Nations has run its course. It has, all things considered, been a good Assembly. A Foreign Minister who has spent every September at Geneva since 1920 (though the Assembly was in November that year) tells me he thinks this year's meetings among the best. Germany has been admitted to membership, the Council has been re-organised (though not necessarily improved), a slavery convention has been adopted, America's reservations to her adherence to the Permanent Court of International Justice have been dealt with.

All this is to the good, and some of it is better than it seems. Germany's entry, for example, is not epitomised in the notable speeches of Dr. Stresemann and M. Briand on Sept. 10, valuable though those utterances were in setting the tone of the new co-operation. More important is the way in which the German delegates dropped into their places in the League machine. Dr. Stresemann took a quite prominent and quite useful part in discussions on the Council. Dr. Breitscheid was rapporteur to the Assembly on various humanitarian questions. Baron von Rheinhaben addressed the Assembly (in excellent French) on the plans for an Economic Conference. Though Germany will no doubt play a larger part at Geneva next year, when she has fully found her feet, she has already played a very satisfactory one this.

But welcome as the admission of a country like Germany to the League of Nations is, it is by no means enough in itself to justify undiluted optimism about the Assembly at which the event took place. And while the Seventh Assembly has no doubt been a good one on the whole, there have been emerging a number of tendencies which will need careful watching in the future. One is the way in which the work has been rushed. Whatever happens, there must be no tacit assumption next year that the Assembly is going to last just three weeks or just four weeks, or just any other precise period.

As things are, *wagons-lits* are the curse of the Assembly, for a sleeping-berth has to be ordered days or weeks in advance, particularly when there is a rush for limited accommodation, and if by chance you are prevented from travelling on the intended day, not only do you have to pay for your place without occupying it, but, what is far worse, you will in all likelihood have to prop your weary diplomatic frame in the unsatisfactory corner of a mere first-class carriage.

Diplomats prefer sleepers, as Miss Anita Loos would put it, and diplomats not only prefer to occupy their sleepers on the night they have ordered them, but in most cases insist on occupying them at any cost. This is written in all seriousness. Every year at Geneva it is the same story. As the Assembly gets near its end there are speculations on every side as to whether it will finish on Saturday. Everyone knows it ought not to finish on Saturday. Everyone can see the work being scamped, important resolutions being put and accepted without discussion, sub-committees' reports being accepted mechanically by

the full committee, and the full committees' in turn by the Assembly. Yet speculation is only in reality half-hearted, for everyone tells you in the end, just as you yourself in the end tell everyone, that of course it will finish on Saturday because the delegates have ordered their sleepers.

The effect of this is serious. It means that delegates themselves are gravely overstrained. Committees, attended by men who have been working hard all day, have been meeting at 10.30 at night and ending at one in the morning. One delegate to whom I was talking close on midnight, told me he had started his work that day at 6.10 a.m. The point need not be laboured further. Its importance is that it is one of several factors, some of them more formidable, tending to rob the League Assembly of much of its influence and prestige. The Assembly's great function is to be a forum of public opinion. No one can pretend it has been that this year. Large questions have been pushed off to committees without any proper preliminary discussion on the Assembly platform, and the reports of the committees have been adopted, often by mere mechanical registration, equally undiscussed, because diplomats prefer sleepers and they had ordered them for Saturday night. The world's conscience cannot express itself that way.

Swiss Floods.

Somewhat alarming accounts were published in the English Press, probably due to the presence in Geneva (in connection with League matters) of the many unoccupied reporters, who were still waiting to get away. From a local point of view the floods are nothing short of a disaster, but compared with what has recently happened in other parts of the world we have been let down very lightly. The total loss is estimated to be about £60,000 and falls on the cantons of Valais and Vaud, and of course the Swiss Federal Railways. Not a single life has been lost. Instructive are the conjectured causes which in the eyes of experts are responsible for the catastrophe. The *Daily Telegraph* (Sept. 28th) attributes it to the recent great heat, which caused the bursting of the pocket of the glacier at the foot of the Dents du Midi and the consequent rush of water. The *Yorkshire Post* (Sept. 29th) flatly contradicts this theory, as will be seen from the following extract:—

The theory of a burst "pocket" on the Plan Nèvé glacier, to which the first fall was attributed ten days ago, was exploded by a military aviator, M. Mercanton, who, flying near the mountain, noted that there was a little cloud on the flank of the Cime de l'Est, whereas the day was otherwise cloudless. He soon discovered that the "cloud" was due to dust from a great rock-fall on the south-eastern slope of the peak. The glacier of Plan Nèvé is supposed by local tradition to serve as a purgatory for those people of St. Maurice who have failed to lead pious lives, and their spirits are popularly reputed to throw down blocks from the glacier to annoy survivors in the valley. The little alpine hamlet of La Rasse, which has frequently been menaced by bursting glacier pockets, is said to be protected by a very early rustic chapel dedicated to Saint Barthélémy. Many pilgrimages are made to this chapel, the sound of whose bell is said to be sufficient to avert a catastrophe.

Another opinion still is quoted by the *Daily Express* (Sept. 29th) thus:—

Switzerland, where heavy land-slides and floods have swept the Rhone Valley, near Lavey-Bains, and St. Maurice, is a country of sudden disasters.

"In the high lands of Switzerland," said Doctor H. H. Thomas, of the Museum of Practical Geology, to a *Daily Express* representative yesterday, "you may have torrential rain in one district and none in the next. The effects of the rain thus appear without warning some miles away."

"I should say that the cause of the sudden floods in the Rhone Valley is material washed into the river bed by swollen streams from lateral valleys. This forms a series of temporary dams that burst successively as the Rhone rises."

"The landslides and rock avalanches are due probably to the disintegration by heavy rain of the scree or deposit that mounts up piecemeal at the foot of a cliff, as the mass above crumbles in the ordinary process of weathering. These scree are all right as long as you do nothing to them, but even one man walking across them may start an avalanche."

"There are, of course, landslides of quite another type that begin for no apparent reason. Some years ago, above Lake Zug, a great frag-

ment separated from the mountain and, breaking up as it went, roared down into the valley.

"The avalanche entered a lake at the bottom, traversed it, and advanced well up the opposite slope. It travelled a distance altogether of some miles in pieces of rock the size of cottages."

How to use Iodine.

I referred last week to an appeal launched by Dr. C. W. Saleeby, and the following article from his pen in the *Daily News* (Sept. 29th) will further elucidate this most important matter. Articles of this kind are the exception in the English Press, as a curious notion of etiquette—incomprehensible to the man in the street—prohibits the recognised medical lights in this country to divulge the results of modern research and their application in practice, through the daily press:—

Many readers have written asking for practical directions as to supplying themselves with iodine on the principles outlined in my article here last July, summarising my lecture to the Child Welfare Conference. This article is written in Switzerland, a pioneer country in this respect, and I have had the advantage of learning directly from Dr. H. Carrière, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Hygiene, and secretary of the Swiss Goitre Commission, something of the present practice in his country. To his courtesy I am much indebted, but unfortunately we are far, as yet, from copying the Swiss methods in England.

First, for the private person as things now are, there would seem to be two practicable methods: it being understood throughout this article that I am discussing hygiene or prevention, and that only the doctor who sees the case can prescribe for goitre or any other illness. We may introduce iodised salt into our homes instead of ordinary salt. This is a simple and safe measure, and a large choice of such salts is now available. Any chemist or grocer should supply them at once. The names of some which occur to me are Premido, made by Hamlett's, in Cheshire; Iodosal, made by Francis Newbery & Co.; Salodine, made by the Salt Union; and Boots' iodised salt. Doubtless there are others. It is a somewhat invidious proceeding to name such preparations in an article like this, but I must do so if it is to be useful. Meanwhile, I add that most of the iodised salts on the market are far too highly priced, no excuse for the figures charged being admissible. The quantities of iodine are minute and their cost is negligible. Also I consider that most of these salts contain far too little iodine. I should prefer the proportion now official in, for instance, the City of Cincinnati, which is one part in five thousand.

Or we may supply ourselves and our children with, say, a weekly tablet of iodine-chocolate, after the fashion so successful amongst the school-children of Switzerland. The two best preparations known to me are iodostarine (with chocolate), made in Basle and obtainable by any chemist from Hofmann, Laroche, Idol Lane, E.C.; and iodicin (with chocolate), a similar but more recent preparation, made by Burroughs Wellcome & Co., in London. The cost of a regular supply of either of these is trifling. Please do not write and ask, for instance, which of these two I prefer. Probably both are equally good.

The public method of supply is far more satisfactory, and I continue to plead for it in our own country. Nothing could be less satisfactory than the kind of experiment, such as some recently quoted, in which, owing to lack of standardisation and official control, no one knows whether the children really got any iodine at all. In several of the cantons of Switzerland and of the United States of America, nothing but iodised salt is now allowed to be sold at all. The health authorities take the matter in hand and protect everybody. In other Swiss cantons both kinds of salt are available, but the price of the two is officially fixed at the same level, or with only a very slight difference. Obviously the former method is the right one. In a few years we shall doubtless adopt in our own country, and then wonder why on earth we did not do so before.

Readers who care to learn how much more there is in this iodine question than merely the prevention of goitre should consult "Farm Feeding" for the present month and learn the results of experiments made at the Staffordshire Farm Institute.

A Mountain 'Varsity.

A fanciful scheme for establishing a university at Davos, is receiving publicity in the *Lancet* (Sept. 25th):—

Dr. Eugen Kollarits, lecturer in the University of Budapest, who is at present living in Switzerland, has put forward an interesting plan for an international university at Davos. His idea is that the professorial staff, as well as the students, should be recruited from the citizens of all civilised nations, and this, he hopes, would do something to bridge the international gulfs left by the war. At the high altitude of Davos, students in the early stage of pulmonary tuberculosis could go on with their work under favourable conditions and in healthy surroundings, far away from the dusty air of the big cities where

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universities are generally situated. There would be admirable facilities for sport, and Davos, which has a resident population of 10,000, seems to be an excellent place at which to set up such a university. Dr. Kollarits suggests that the League of Nations should undertake its foundation; the 30 or more countries which are members of the League could contribute to the cost without any great effort.

If the League of Nations is to be asked to supply the necessary wherewithal, it seems to me that such funds might be better employed in "financing" the

Spahlinger Treatment

about which the following Cassandra call appears in the *Westminster Gazette* (Sept. 27th):—

"I think Henry Spahlinger is the most extraordinary man alive. If he could bring his cure to England there would be no need for anyone to suffer from any form of consumption," said Mrs. Roscoe Brunner, who has just returned from a visit to the Spahlinger laboratories in Switzerland, to the *Westminster Gazette* yesterday.

"His cure is cut-and-dried. Some of my friends who suffered from the disease have been over to Geneva and have returned cured. Unfortunately this marvellous discovery is withheld from most people who are most in need of it by lack of funds."

In spite of this handicap, the scientist is already curing many people at his own home. People from all countries are going there, and all come back cured.

Switzerland's White Coal.

From the *Times Engineering Supplement* (Sept. 25th):—

One result of the World Power Conference, at Basel, has been to reveal the backwardness of Switzerland in adopting electricity in agriculture, only 50 million kw.h. being used by one million farmers, as compared with 610 million kw.h. for 1,060,000 in Norway, and 670 million kw.h. for 20 millions in Germany. On the other hand, it has shown the great progress made by Switzerland in railway electrification. Whereas, so far, Germany has only electrified 1.47 per cent. of her railway system, Austria 3.9 per cent., and Italy 4.73 per cent., Switzerland has converted 34 per cent.

Swiss Transit Trade.

Switzerland having no direct access to the sea, there is naturally a keen competition for our transit trade and Genoa is bound to be in the running; however, to maintain that this port was "entitled to the Swiss transit trade, which at present was illogically attracted to the north-east ports," is a very bold statement. The following report is taken from *Lloyds List* (Sept. 24th):—

In the course of the meetings which have been held at Rome by the International Delegation of Sempione, the question of developing Swiss transit trade through this port has been

raised. In connection with the report of President Zingg with regard to the tariff for the carriage of goods from Switzerland to Italy on the line of the Sempione, Signor Broccardi, the Italian representative, referred to the important reductions granted on the tariff for the unloading and loading of wheat destined to Switzerland, and to the reductions made by the Silos Company for storage at Genoa. Signor Broccardi furthermore noted that the question of facilitating the passage of other Swiss products through Genoa, such as chocolate, condensed milk, cotton, cocoa, tobacco and aluminium, was under consideration. He said that the International Delegation of Sempione were following those efforts with the greatest interest, as the results would have a great influence on the traffic on the Simplon Railway. He added that the Swiss transit trade through Genoa was still too small compared to the Swiss overseas trade, since it reached 180,000 tons, against 6,000,000 tons. He was of the opinion that the great bulk of Swiss traffic with the Levant, the Far East (via Suez), and with Central and South America should be shipped via Genoa. In conclusion, he hoped that the Swiss authorities would make the necessary alterations in tariffs, in order that the port of Genoa might obtain the Swiss transit trade to which it was entitled, and which at present was illogically attracted to the north-east ports. President Zingg thanked Signor Broccardi for his very interesting remarks, and stated that they would be communicated to the Federal Railway Administration.

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