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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

It is rumoured that efforts are being made in official circles at Berne to re-open diplomatic relations with Russia.

The League of Nations Council has nominated Dr. Paul Lachenal, advocate in Geneva, President of the Germano-Polish Arbitration Tribunal.

In the elections for the St. Gall Regierungsrat during the week-end all the former seven members were re-elected; the Council consists of three Conservatives, three Liberals and one Democrat, the latter being the much-attacked Mr. Otto Weber, who has recently been in the limelight on account of certain newspaper polemics.

In the canton Thurgau Proportional Representation is to be retained in spite of an intensive propaganda campaign of the Liberals against this system, which was first introduced for cantonal elections in 1919.

Considerable damage was caused to the Hotel Waldhaus in Sils-Maria (Grisons) by a fire which broke out in a room where repairs were in progress. The neighbouring fire brigades were able to confine the flames to the eastern part of the large building, which altogether holds 230 beds. Very few guests were in residence as the hotel was on the point of closing for the season.

The cigar factory, and most of the stock, belonging to D. Weber in Triengen (Lucerne) has been destroyed by fire.

For being responsible for an accident which caused the death of a passenger while driving his car in an intoxicated condition, a Zurich butcher, Emil Diener, has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

Whilst felling wood near Münster (Grisons) a gang of four were surprised by an avalanche which suddenly descended from the Piz Cavalatsch; one of them, Anton Andri, from Münster, was caught and perished in its wake.

National Councillor Dr. Emil Hofman died last Wednesday (March 9th) at the age of 62 in the Victoria hospital in Berne after a protracted illness. He was born at Engishofen (Thurgau) and studied both theology and philosophy. At the age of 25 he was elected pastor of Stettfurt (Thurgau) which living he relinquished eight years after on his appointment as school inspector. For 29 years he has been a member of the National Council, which he presided over last year. Dr. Hofmann was extremely popular in every part of the Thurgau; he lost his two sons in 1918 during the critical days of the general strike.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Ferienheim für Auslandschweizer.**—Mit Sitz in Rhäzüns ist eine Gesellschaft gegründet worden, die das alte Schloss Rhäzüns im Domleschg ankaufen und zu einem Ferienheim für wenig bemittelte Auslandschweizer ausbauen will. Der Gedanke dieser Gründung, der tatkräftig gefördert wird vom Auslandschweizer-Sekretariat der Neuen Helvetischen Gesellschaft, verdient die Unterstützung weiterer Volkskreise. Nicht nur wird dadurch eines der schönsten Schlösser des Landes in gutem Zustand erhalten sondern es wird auch ein alter Wunsch der Schweizerkolonien im Auslande verwirklicht, durch Schaffung einer billigen und guten Feriengelegenheit für Landsleute, denen das Glück keine grossen Güter in den Schoss warf.

Der Ankauf der Liegenschaft kommt auf 50,000 Fr. zu stehen, die Instandstellung des Schlosses auf 57,000 Fr. Für Mobilien sind 22,000 Fr. vorgesehen, weitere 20,000 Fr. als Betriebskapital, 5,000 Fr. für die Anlage von Obst- und Gemüsekulturen, 15,000 Franken für Spesen, Vorarbeiten, Verwaltung, Steuern, Reserve usw., so dass also insgesamt 170,000 Fr. aufgebracht werden müssen, und zwar durch freiwillige Spenden à fonds perdu und durch Zeichnung von unverzinslichen Anteilscheinen im Nominalbetrage von 100 Fr. Beiträge und Einzahlungen für Anteilscheine sind zu richten an das Auslandschweizersekretariat in Freiburg. *Lucerner Tagblatt.*

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### The Free Zones Controversy.

The ratification by the French Senate of the Franco-Swiss Agreement with reference to the Savoy Zones seems to be relegated to the Greek Kalends. At a moment when it looked as if all obstacles had been removed a French senator made the startling statement that Switzerland had not yet given its formal consent to Article 435 of the Versailles Treaty, by which the military neutrality of Upper Savoy is abolished. It seems strange that these two entirely different matters should be mixed up, all the more as this particular issue was never mentioned at the time when the then French Premier—M. Heriot—signed the Free Zones agreement. Here is what the *Manchester Guardian* (March 9th) says on the matter:—

For reasons known only to her Foreign Office officials France is still finding means to prevent her dispute with the Swiss from coming before the Permanent Court of International Justice. The dispute concerns what are known as the "free zones" of Savoy. Those districts immediately adjoin Geneva, and for convenience' sake the treaties of 1814 and 1815 fixed the Customs line at their western border and not at the national frontier. The Treaty of Versailles, however, declared that these treaties were "no longer consistent with present conditions," and recommended the two countries to sign a new agreement on the matter. After prolonged discussions an agreement was reached satisfying the French demands, but the Swiss nation rejected it by referendum, and in November, 1923, the French, without more ado, advanced the Customs line to the Franco-Swiss frontier. Against this high-handed action the Swiss protested, but it was not until October, 1924, that France—M. Heriot having meantime replaced M. Poincaré—consented to submit the matter to the Permanent Court of Justice. Not until last year, however, did the French Chamber ratify that consent, and before the Senate can follow suit a new obstacle has been created. The old treaties also contained provisions for the neutralisation of the so-called Savoy zones, which correspond partly with the Customs zones, and these provisions were abrogated by the Franco-Swiss Agreement of 1919. The agreement is fully operative, but, in the heat of the controversy before 1923, the formal ratification by Switzerland was held up. Now, though it has hardly ever been mentioned since then, what is purely a formal omission is made the occasion of holding up an urgent arbitration case and the Swiss can hardly be blamed for showing their annoyance. They speak of appealing to the League, and if they do so it will be interesting to see what sort of defence France can offer.

### A History of Switzerland.

The latest addition to the history of our Confederation is supplied by a volume just published by Messrs. Payot in Paris (Fr. 24) and written by that great authority, Mr. William Martin. The following are some critical remarks which appeared in the *Spectator* (March 5th) over the signature of James F. Muirhead:—

The well-known International Editor of the *Journal de Genève* has given us what is in many respects a model of a short history. The author belongs to the modern philosophical school of historians; and he has succeeded in imparting both clearness and unity to the somewhat complicated story of the numerous separate entities now combined in the Swiss Confederation.

The thesis might, perhaps, be formulated as an attempt to explain how Switzerland, small both in area and population, has played an historical rôle so out of proportion to its material importance. The Swiss Confederation was born—a little League of Nations—at the end of the thirteenth century, an amazing co-operation of units, differing in race and language, which might very well have been prejudged as essentially incapable of combination. The principle of co-operation thus established was severely tried by the new source of disagreement introduced by the Reformation; but it stood the test even of the *odium theologicum*. And down to our own day the subsequent story of the country may be summed up as a constant and steady advance in internal federation, with strict adherence to neutrality as its external counterpart.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century Switzerland was one of the most stable countries and greatest military powers in Europe; and

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

March 20th, 1633.—During the Thirty Years' War: Swedish soldiers appear at the gates of Basel. During these Religious Wars, Switzerland was split into factions. The Protestants inclined for an alliance towards Sweden. During the battle, near Rheinfelden, the Duke de Rohan, called the "Good Duke" and beloved by all with whom he came in contact, was killed. His body was buried in the Cathedral of St. Pierre, at Geneva.

March 21st, 1487.—Death of Niklaus von der Flüe at Ranft. This pious hermit is one of the most sympathetic figures in our national history. He it was who prevented a split of the Confederates at the meeting at Stans (22nd Dec., 1481).

March 25th, 1653.—Peasants' War, caused by dissatisfaction of the peasantry. The "hards," as the rebels named themselves, threatened to burn the dwellings of the "softs," that is to say, the adherents of the Government, and cut off their beards, and even slit their ears in order to be able to recognise them.—*Oechsli*.

March 25th, 1388.—Battle between Bern and Fribourg at the Roten Turn.

March 26th, 1906.—Swiss Mountain Artillery newly organised.

the religious dissensions may be the chief cause why she was checked on this more adventurous path and developed her present independence on safer and more modest lines.

It is a little disappointing to find that the art and literature of Switzerland are practically ignored in this volume; but doubtless M. Martin deliberately decided that they were beyond his scope. A British reviewer may, perhaps, be pardoned for wishing for a little fuller recognition of England's support of Swiss policy, such as was so generously accorded by the eminent Swiss historian, Wilhelm Oechsli, and by the great Swiss poet, Carl Spitteler, in his oration of December 14th, 1914. It is also, to our English ideas, strange that a book of this importance should be issued without either maps or index; but, except for these minor criticisms, the book is one which can be cordially, indeed enthusiastically, recommended.

### Land of Most Suicides.

No comment is needed on the following from the *Daily Mail* (March 2nd):—

Between eight and nine hundred suicides take place yearly in Switzerland, which after Denmark enjoys the unenviable distinction of having more deaths of this kind in proportion to its population than any other country in Europe.

Alcoholism is responsible for 17 per cent. of the suicides.

An anti-suicide committee, founded in Zurich five years ago, intervened effectively in 600 cases of attempted or contemplated suicide.

Thanks to a communal subsidy and private donations it was possible to give a new start in life to many of the utterly despairing who had made the tragic resolve to end their lives.

### Froth Blowers in Switzerland.

The Froth Blowers are conquering Switzerland with flying colours, to judge from the following from the *Daily Mail* (March 5th); if there are any Swiss amongst our subscribers who have not yet joined this inspiring Order I shall be delighted to get them initiated on receiving the statutory five shilling fee.

Like football, boxing, and other British pursuits, froth blowing has taken complete hold on the Continent, and almost every country now boasts at least two or three centres where the blowers' order is well entrenched.

The honour of pioneership unquestionably goes to Switzerland, which now prides itself on several branches with pretensions to the coveted titles of "Grand Typhoon," "Cloudburst" and what not. Terriet was first initiated into the brotherhood more than a year ago, when a young Scot from London breezed into the English club and informed its astonished members that he was prepared to give "immediate delivery" of the insignia to all new subscribers.

In order to expedite business this young philanthropist offered the Froth Blowers' cuff