

# Home news

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

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### FEDERAL.

#### GENEVA AND SAVOY ZONES.

The new régime in the Free Zones in Savoy and the Pays de Gex has come into force on January 1st, and the so-called "Sardinian Zone" created round Geneva by the Treaty of Vienna in 1815 has again come into existence. The new agreement will regulate economic exchanges between the two territories, the Canton of Geneva with an area of nearly 140 square miles and a population of 180,000, and the "Sardinian Zone" with an area of 280 square miles and a population of 35,000, mostly peasants. In fact the new régime sets up free trade between the two territories with certain import quotas and restrictions on the Swiss side so as to minimize the competition of cheap products from the Zone in the Swiss market.

In Geneva opinion is divided as to the economic advantages to be derived from the new régime. On the one hand those traders who raised their prices, and at the same time the cost of living, when competition from the Zone disappeared in 1914 declare that the new agreement will mean ruin for many Genevese trades and industries, as they will find it impossible to compete with the goods from the Zone. That may partly be true in the case of agriculture, as costs of production are smaller in the Zone than in Geneva, but Genevese farmers have always existed and have managed to live even at the time when free trading was extended to Haute Savoie as a whole. On the whole, supporters of the new régime say that it will again bring prosperity to Geneva.

The truth lies between these two extreme opinions. Free trading is bound to harm some Genevese industries and trades until they have managed to adapt themselves to the new circumstances. But it is clear that the population will benefit from the new régime especially in regard to foodstuffs which are bound to become cheaper. It may be further remarked that before the War the "Sardinian Zone" purchased for an annual value of about 10,000,000 Swiss francs in Geneva and that even if that trade be now reduced by half, owing to the high value of Swiss currency, it would be, nevertheless, a boon to Genevese merchants.

The only drawback is the fact that while France will move her Customs line back to the boundary of the Free Zones she will leave some agents at the political frontier for purely fiscal purposes. It means that traders as well as tourists will have to submit to two visits instead of one, but it is possible that some arrangement will be arrived at so as to lessen that trouble.

#### A GIFT TO SWITZERLAND.

The Federal Council has decided to accept the castle of Oberhofen, offered as a gift to the Swiss nation by the owner, Mr. William Cowley Mease, of Philadelphia, and to use it as a national museum.

The castle, which stands near the north-west end of the Lake of Thun, has frequently changed proprietors. The oldest central tower probably dates from Roman times, like the water-towers of Lucerne and Zurich. There is a reference in a medieval document to the Edler Seilger von Oberhofen, who founded the Convent of Interlaken in 1130. Soon after that the family of the Edlen von Oberhofen became extinct and the property passed to the Habsburgs and from them to the Canton of Berne. In 1652 the bailiwick of Oberhofen was constituted with the neighbouring villages on both sides of the lake, and until its dissolution in 1799 its holder was generally a Bernese patrician.

In 1799 Oberhofen was joined to the prefecture of Thun, but after 1815 the castle once more became private property. After several more changes of ownership Oberhofen was restored and enlarged by Count de Pourtalès of Neuchâtel, whose daughter and heiress, the Countess Helène, in 1868 married Ferdinand Count Harrach, of the second or Silesian line of that mediæval House. After the post-War inflation in Germany the castle was sold to Mr. Mease.

### SWISS WINTER SPORT.

The Christmas holiday thaw in Switzerland did not last more than one day, and was followed by small snowfalls, so that conditions for winter sport are again excellent all over the country. The temperatures remain under freezing point, and skating and ski-ing conditions are perfect above the 3,000ft. level, where snow is over 2ft. deep and powdery.

### LOCAL.

#### ZURICH.

Professional "magicians" have been flocking to Switzerland in such numbers during recent months that the authorities are seriously alarmed.

To protect the public the Zurich police have banned the admission of any more members of the profession into the Canton.

The "magicians," most of whom have come from Germany, have set up lucrative practices in all parts of the country, women being their most profitable clients.

Lately, however, the "magicians" have been suffering from ruthless "cut-throat" competition among themselves. They do not hesitate to denounce each other as charlatans and sorcerers — much to the bewilderment of the public.

The inhabitants of the town of Zurich at the end of the last year numbers 312,600.

#### BERNE.

M. Pilet-Golaz, President of the Swiss Confederation, has received on New Years Day, the representatives of the Bernese Government and the members of the Diplomatic Corps.

From the highest railway station in Europe, on the summit of the Jungfrauoch it is now possible to communicate by telephone with all quarters of the globe. The installation is automatic and is unique. The wires are entirely underground, where avalanches, snow, and rolling rocks so frequent at such altitudes, cannot destroy them.

After an interval of four years a celebration was held at Burgdorf in honour of Swiss "long service" employees.

Over 200 servants with their employers took part. There were 41 who could look back on more than 25 years' service, including some who had been in the same employment for 52, 50, 44, 42 and 40 years. One family brought five servants who had been in their employ 30, 14, 12, 10 and 7 years. Another had four with 31, 29, 19 and 12 years' service. There were many other instances of the same kind.

There were speeches and music and rewards were distributed among the faithful employees, who were divided into three classes according to length of service.

#### LUCERNE.

M. Alois Balmer, the well-known painter of Biblical subjects has died at Lucerne at the age of 68; he studied at Munich and Paris.

#### SCHWYZ.

Meinrad Lienert, the prominent writer of dialect prose and poetry has died; he ranks as one

of the most famous authors in our country. He was born at Einsiedeln in 1875 and is a *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Zurich. He also made a name in the journalistic profession.

### BASLE.

Professor Wilhelm His, the eminent anatomist and scholar, has celebrated his 70th birthday; he was from 1902 until 1906 head of the medical Clinic at Basle. In 1907 the University of Berlin appointed him head of the 1st "Medizinischen Klinik der Charité" which post he occupied for many years. Professor His is the descendent of an old Basle family, and his father Wilhelm His was also a noted anatomist. He is at present living in retirement in the neighbourhood of Basle.

Dr. Fritz Aemmer, has celebrated his 25th Jubilee as a member of the cantonal government; he entered the Grand Council in 1905 as a radical. In 1911 he joined the Government of his native canton, over which he presided in 1913, 1919, 1926 and 1933.

### NIDWALDEN.

M. Josef Käslin, Public Prosecutor of the canton of Nidwalden has died at Stans at the age of 73 after a long illness.

### GRISONS.

The St. Moritz season may be said to have begun officially on December 23rd, when the Bob Run and the Cresta Run were opened. Both runs this year are particularly well made, thanks to the activities of Herr Thoma, of the Cresta, and Colonel Orr, the new secretary of the Bobsleigh Club.

The curling competition for the Badan Cup, the first of the season, was held on the Engiadina Rink and resulted in a victory for Dale Vedova's team (Barry, Mortigioni, and Martinelli), who beat Lareida's team (Arton, Sachse, and Frizzoni) by eight stones to seven in the final round.

In ski-jumping competition on the Olympia Schanze the Morven Cup for the best Alpina Club jumper was won by A. Badrutt with 328.4 points; the winner of the senior event was Marcel Raymond with 344 points, and he also won Mrs. Keiller's prize for the best jump of the day, 68.5 metres. The first race of the season held by the S.S. Club was a downhill ski race from Corviglia to Oberalpina, and in class "A" the winner was Knoll in 4 min. 2sec., who just beat F. von Opel (4min. 4sec.).

The ice hockey tournament for the St. Moritz Ice-Hockey Trophy will be held this week, beginning to-morrow. The following teams will take part:— Milan Ice Skating Club, Vienna Skating Association, Queen's Club (London), Rapid Club (Paris), Prague Lawn Tennis Club, Budapest, and St. Moritz. On January 6th and 7th Cambridge University will play St. Moritz, and on the two following days St. Moritz and Arosa will play a round for the Swiss Championship; another round will be played on January 21st between St. Moritz and Davos. The chief event of the ice-hockey season at St. Moritz is the match between St. Moritz and Canada on February 13th.

Colonel E. von Tscharner, who recently died has left an amount of 50,000 frs. to the community of Tomils, and a further 33,000 for various charities.

### VAUD.

Federal Judge Dr. J. K. Engeler has celebrated on the 1st of January his 70th birthday anniversary. Dr. Engeler entered the Federal Tribunal in 1923, he was formerly Vice-President of the Cantonal Tribunal in St. Gall.

Federal Judge Dr. Alexander von Arx has died at Lausanne at the age of 55. He was born in 1879 at Olten and entered the Supreme Court in 1930. From 1919-1930 he was a member of Parliament. (National Council).

### TICINO.

The death is reported from Lugano-Massagno of M. Giacomo Casella, Manager of the States bank of the canton of Ticino at Lugano, at the age of 50.

## CITY SWISS CLUB.

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