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HOME NEWS

In reply to an interpellation by National Councillor Weber (St. Gall), who drew attention to the growing investments of foreign capital in Swiss undertakings, the Federal Council stated that existing legislation did not empower him to counteract infiltration that had admittedly taken place in certain instances.

The occupation of the Ruhr and the strike of the miners has resulted in a shortage of coal, the price of which has increased by about 15%. The Swiss Federal Railways are endeavouring to replenish their stocks from other sources notably Silesia.

The Federal Home Office is organising a competition for posters, displaying the characteristics of our country in the spheres of landscape, transport, historical monuments, sport, social activities, national costumes, etc. Swiss and foreign artists, the latter only if domiciled in Switzerland for at least five years, are invited to compete.

The Lucerne Grosse Rat has fixed Frs. 11,000 as the remuneration of a Regierungsrat: the State employees are to receive half the bonus (for increase in cost of living) which was paid to them during the second half of 1922. After a lengthy discussion it was decided that the new taxation decree shall become law. It will be remembered that, although the recent referendum was unfavourable, it was considered as a confirmation, an "absolute majority," in conformity with the cantonal constitution, not having voted against it. The final word, however, will rest with the Federal Tribunal, which has been appealed to in this matter.

In the elections for the Regierungsrat of the canton of Thurgau all the old members were successful (Dr. Hofmann, Dr. Altwegg, Dr. Kreis, A. Schmid), with the exception of A. Wiesli (Catholic), the late head of the Finance Department, whose proposed re-election gave rise to an animated controversy.

The Grosse Rat of Solothurn has granted a loan of Frs. 200,000 to cantonal peasants in order to maintain live stock, and voted a credit of Frs. 114,000 for work to reduce unemployment.

The Basle Grosse Rat has voted special building credits to the amount of Frs. 460,000 in order to alleviate unemployment.

By decision of the Municipal Council of Lausanne a 5 per cent. reduction will be made in the wages of their employees. A similar retrenchment is being put into force in the canton of Valais.

The Swiss "Typographia" (the printers' trade union) has ratified the new agreement with the employers, thus regulating the working conditions till the end of August, 1924.

The central committee of the "Association suisse pour le suffrage féminin," at a meeting held in Berne on the 11th inst., lodged a protest against the fact that women, who are a most important producing and consuming factor in the community, are debarred from voting in the forthcoming initiative on the customs tariff.

The *Gaulois*, which, when the Zones Convention was rejected by our people, was anything but just and fair in its comments, now publishes from the pen of M. Henri Bordeaux, a member of the French Academy, an article, entitled "L'Amitié suisse," which should go a long way towards helping forward an equitable settlement of a controversy, the spirit of which every Swiss patriot cannot but regret. Those who accuse the "Suisse alémanique" of having been influenced by ulterior motives, conveniently ignore the fact that the canton

of Geneva, which is most directly affected, has recorded a negative—though very feeble—verdict.

The doyen of Swiss guides, Peter Taugwalder, died last Saturday at Zermatt at the age of 81. His death removes the last of the survivors of the terrible tragedy which marked the first ascent of the Matterhorn on the 14th of July, 1865. The episode is recalled to our minds by the following comment from the *Daily Express* (12th March):—

"The secret of that tragedy, when four of Mr. Edward Whymper's party, Mr. Hadow, Mr. Hudson, Lord Francis Douglas, and the guide Croz, lost their lives, died with Peter. Doubt was expressed whether the rope broke or was cut.

The descent had only just begun when Mr. Hadow lost his footing and fell, carrying with him Mr. Hudson, Lord Francis Douglas and the guide Croz. The rope parted, and that alone saved the lives of Mr. Whymper, Peter Taugwalder and his elder brother. The body of Lord Francis Douglas was never recovered from the glacier.

Many alpinists consider that Mr. Whymper wrongfully accused the elder Taugwalder of cutting the rope in order to save his own life. It was contended at the time that the rope by which the party was secured together was old and worn and unequal to the strain of the dangling bodies of four men.

When the elder Taugwalder died, his death was ascribed to a broken heart because of the false accusation.

Peter Taugwalder, since the accident, has climbed the Matterhorn 125 times without the slightest mishap. He never passed the fatal spot without a short silent prayer. Peter, moreover, never forgot the sight of the spectral luminous arch which appeared high in the sky, above the Lysskamm Mountain, during the descent on the night after the accident. This aerial phenomenon is rarely witnessed in the Alps."

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Switzerland and the Ruhr Occupation.

Writing from Geneva, the *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent states (March 3rd):—

"The biggest Swiss paper, the 'Neue Zürcher Zeitung,' to-day prints an article, pointing out that the Ruhr blockade is gradually paralysing Swiss economic life, and will shortly lead to a recrudescence of grave unemployment, from which Switzerland has only just emerged. The most serious difficulty is caused not by the absence of Ruhr coal and coke, but from the holding up of pig iron and half-manufactured iron and steel products, such as sheet iron for boilers, corrugated iron, steel rails, locomotive wheels and piston rods. Six thousand tons of such products for Switzerland are now bottled up in the Ruhr, while the Swiss machine industry is being brought to a standstill, owing to the impossibility of completing orders in the absence of essential parts.

According to information received here, big protest meetings against the Ruhr occupation are being held all over Sweden, and the people of Holland, as well as Switzerland, are becoming anxious over the grave economic prospect caused by the Ruhr blockade."

Napoleon I.'s blockade of Germany, directed against England chiefly, finally led to Waterloo!

Let us turn away from politics and breathe the pure air of our mountains. The following charming pen picture is taken from an article on "The Parsenn Hut" (*Morning Post*, March 6th):—

A Sky of Frozen Blue.

"It is soon after the daily pilgrims of the snow have left that Parsenn may be seen in its greatest glory. It is then that chance wayfarers will arrive to spend a night within the warm shelter of the hut. And they need it, for when the sun dips behind the Weissfluh to the west, when the rosy shafts come slanting upwards over the jagged outline, the majesty of the Alps becomes truly tangible and merciful. The sky takes on a look of illimitable Wedgwood blue to the east, darkening as it approaches the snow-bound horizon. Yonder stand the livid peaks of Silvretta! Cruel in their distant iciness, those rocks and glaciers, that for very sharpness seem as though cut with a razor against the deepening sky, silently proclaim that up there no life could defy the power of the cold and survive. Slowly the light diminishes, showing in the east that frozen blue only to be seen on tempered steel; hard and sharp, as that metal, everything in nature seems to turn; the white of the snow and glacier becomes a visible ally of death.

Then the lamp is lit in the hut."
"The fire crackles in the stove"—the story might go on—"and, after the day's exertions, what could be nicer than some sweet, soft music?" Turning to *The Morning Post* of March 7th, we read:—

A Chopin Novelty.

"News comes of a twenty-fifth Prelude of Chopin. Emile Blanchet, the Swiss pianist, played at a recital in Paris, a week or two ago, a Prelude in A flat minor, said to have been written by Chopin at Paris in 1834. We are told that he gave the manuscript to a pupil, one Mlle. Forget, who appears to have lived up to her name, for the work seems to have been lost to sight until 1918, when it was discovered among some old family papers. The piece is only moderately difficult,



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and is lyrical in style. A Swiss publisher has brought it out. Has a copy come to England yet?"

Reading the above two paragraphs over again, we cannot possibly bring ourselves to publish, as we originally wanted to do, a few more extracts from the English Press, dealing with problems of European Politics. What a wonderful influence music and the contemplation of our eternal mountains have on our mind! Would it not be possible, perhaps, to have the next political Conference—of course, owing to strictly limited room, only Prime Ministers to be invited—somewhere in one of our Alpine Huts? The Guggi-Hut, on the slopes of the Jungfrau, for instance. We feel sure that the sordid considerations, springing from Lust of Power, Jealousy, Fear, etc., would disappear in the pure air. Political and economical matters, requiring adjustment, would find an equitable solution, because the negotiators would have before them the towering Peaks, would realise what pigmies we humans are, after all, would recognise that, in the face of Eternity, human squabbles are contemptible, would be conscious of the bond that unites the human race, in spite of everything seemingly to the contrary, and would endeavour to make life easier for one another, instead of trying, as they seem to do now, to impose on each other! We all know that people living in mountainous regions, like the Swiss, are freedom-loving, that geographical position exercises a tremendous influence on the character of nations. Does not our own history prove that? Does not real freedom mean "free to serve"? Do not we Swiss gain what moral force we have from the fact that we have no "foreign policy," that we are always ready, at least we hope so, to serve others? Does not that point to the course which the evolution of mankind, economically and politically speaking, must inevitably take? Abolition of political and economical frontiers! Do you, dear reader, realise that all customs duties and similar artificial hindrances, imposed by different peoples, are due to the fact that Christian Brotherhood is, so far, an ideal, and that nearly 2,000 years have not sufficed yet for intelligent Europeans to translate their aspirations into facts? Do you realise that, as long as you think in terms of individually separated nations, you think along a line diametrically opposed to the teachings of Christ and of other religious leaders?

In these "Notes and Gleanings" we do not want to give you simply a collection of paragraphs culled from the Press. We want to tell you how their perusal strikes our imagination, and what we think. What do you think?

Lausanne as a Residence

forms the title of an interesting article in the *Lady* (March 1st) by "Mary Chichele." We quote the last paragraph:—

"I never regretted for one moment the inspiration to come to Lausanne, where I stayed for quite a long time. We lived happily, comfortably and with profit to ourselves on a sum which would not have gone so far in England. The children received an excellent education at a very moderate cost. They had good food and a good climate, and looked well and healthy during the whole period of our residence there."