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HOME NEWS

The Federal Council has issued the following message to the two Chambers, in recommending them to accept the compromise arrived at with the French Government in the Free Zones controversy. Though a final settlement may not be expected before a year or two, the new customs barrier as established by the arbitrary action objected to remains operative.

Si le Conseil fédéral a insisté autant qu'il l'a fait pour obtenir qu'à défaut d'entente amiable la solution de la question des zones fût demandée à des juges, c'est qu'il estimait servir ainsi non seulement la cause de la dignité nationale, mais aussi celle de la justice internationale, qui ne fait pas de distinction entre les grands et les petits Etats.

Nous nous plaignons à reconnaître que le gouvernement français, en acceptant le projet de compromis, a fait preuve de dispositions amicales vis-à-vis de notre pays.

En plaçant la Suisse et la France sur un pied d'égalité devant une Cour dont la haute impartialité ne saurait être mise en doute, ce compromis enlève à la question des zones le caractère irritant qui, à la longue, eût risqué de porter gravement atteinte à la cordialité traditionnelle des relations entre les deux pays.

Le compromis actuellement soumis à votre approbation engage enfin cette affaire délicate dans la voie d'un règlement définitif et qui, quel qu'il puisse être, sera loyalement accepté par les deux parties.

A motion raised in the National Council to create a parliamentary commission for foreign affairs—similar to the one existing in France—has been declared by the Federal Council to be unconstitutional.

The employees of the Geneva tramways have decided to go on strike on Jan. 1st if the proposed reduction of ten francs in their monthly wages is insisted upon. The company, in spite of the comparatively high fares charged, has been in financial straits for some years, chiefly on account of the disinclination of the people to travel on the trams: it is said that about 40,000 bicycles are in daily use in the streets of Geneva.

Statistics, compiled by the Interlaken Tourist Office, record the fact that during the period of March 1st to Sept. 30th no less than 73,649 tourists stayed at the local hotels and pensions. This constitutes an increase of about 38 per cent. as compared with the 1923 season.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Federal Tribunal in Lausanne (22th October, 1874) the canton of Vaud is giving a banquet, which will conclude the official ceremony to take place at the beginning of next year.

Dr. Jean Keser died on Nov. 16th in Geneva after a long illness. Dr. Keser will be remembered by the older member of the London Swiss Colony, where for upwards of twenty years he practised and occupied an eminent position in English medical circles; he was a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and one of the physicians of the French Hospital in London. In consequence of eye trouble he returned in 1900 to Lausanne and subsequently settled down in Geneva; during the war he rendered great services to French wounded soldiers and refugees passing through that town, and in recognition thereof was recently nominated officer of the Légion d'Honneur.

While thawing a frozen water-pipe, Fritz Niederhauser, a farmer in Wolfswil, near Olten, fell from the ladder with a soldering lamp, the latter igniting a straw heap on the ground near by. The fire rapidly spread, with the result that the house, barn and adjoining workshop were completely burnt out.

Miss Lillian Fischer, the daughter of the late Mr. Hans Fischer-Petersen, while driving a car near the forest of Gossau (Zurich), overran the edge of the road which was covered with a deep layer of snow; the car turned somersault, and the lady subsequently succumbed to her injuries.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Ce qu'il en coûte de monter dans un train en marche.
Parmi les multiples recours en grâce adressés à l'assemblée fédérale, il en est un qui ne laisse pas d'être intéressant, ne fût-ce que par le principe qu'il met en jeu:

Sur la place de la gare à Berne, un étudiant, M. Félix Weil, a sauté dans un train routier en partance de la ligne Zollikofen-Berne. Les tribunaux bernois l'ont condamné de ce fait à une amende de 5 francs et à 4 francs de frais. L'étudiant, qui est candidat en philosophie, a refusé d'accepter philosophiquement cet arrêt.

Avec la fougue de la jeunesse (cet âge — 28 ans — est sans pitié) il a mis, pour ses cent sous, en branle la gigantesque machine fédérale. Il sollicite la remise de la somme à laquelle il a été condamné, prétendant avec un imperturbable sérieux que sa bourse d'étudiant ne peut supporter une dépense aussi lourde. Il déclare que le train s'était mis en marche très lentement et que son acte ne l'exposait à aucun danger. Pour lui, la contravention dressée par l'agent de police est un acte de "pédanterie." (A Berne, on emploie le mot français "pédant," comme beaucoup d'autres, d'ailleurs, dans un sens purement arbitraire. Un pédant est un être pointilleux à l'extrême, comme un monsieur "solide" est un monsieur de moeurs sérieuses, ce qui fait que les initiés ne sourient même plus en lisant dans les annonces qu'une jeune veuve louerait une chambre à un ouvrier solide.)

Le Conseil fédéral, dans son rapport sur les recours en grâce, consacre près d'une page à cette affaire et, naturellement, propose de repousser ce futile recours. Mais quelle belle chose quand même que la démocratie! Un jeune homme monte dans un tramway (car le train de Soleur: n'est pas autre chose!) au moment où le convoi s'ébranle. Un agent trop zélé lui dressa contravention. Et voilà tout le royaume de Dame Thémis en émoi. Tour à tour le directeur de police de la ville de Berne, le préfet du district, le directeur de la police cantonale, les sept sages du Conseil fédéral, éclairés par leur chancelier, penchent sur cette grave affaire leurs fronts riches d'idées et pauvres de cheveux.

Puis on rédige un rapport, on l'imprime; on l'envoie à la commission des grâces qui l'examinera avec attention et gravité.

Enfin, devant les 242 membres de l'Assemblée fédérale, un député rapportera sur cette affaire au chapitre des recours. L'assemblée repoussera le recours.

Et l'énorme amas des dossiers engendrés par une contravention de cent sous sera couronné d'une lettre de la Chancellerie fédérale communicant à l'étudiant la volonté des représentants du peuple.

Au total, des heures et des heures de travail, des correspondances innombrables, des kilos de papier gaspillé, des méninges fatigués. Et tout cela pour cent sous. L'étudiant autour de tout ce tapage doit être un lecteur de Courteline. Pour cent sous qu'on l'a obligé obstinément à payer il a trouvé le moyen de faire déboursier des centaines et des centaines de francs à la sacro-sainte Administration. (*La Suisse.*)

Une maison... en "bâlade." — Une curieuse opération est actuellement en voie d'exécution à Perlen, dans le canton de Lucerne. Il s'agit... tout simplement (!) du transport d'une maison selon les méthodes américaines.

Cette maison a une façade de dix-huit mètres et une hauteur de sept mètres. Trente vérins l'ont soulevée au-dessus de ses fondations. Pour le transfert, on utilise 2,000 traverses de chemin de fer sur lesquelles sont établis 200 rails. La maison, du poids de 700 à 800 tonnes, repose actuellement à environ 80 mètres de l'endroit où elle fut faite, sur 70 rouleaux de fer. Cette construction est la propriété de la fabrique de papier de Perlen et doit être déplacée parce que sur son emplacement doit être établie une nouvelle voie de service pour la fabrique.

La traction s'effectue par la manoeuvre de treuils puissants qui peuvent faire franchir à la bâtisse une dizaine de mètres par jour.

De nouvelles fondations ont été préparées pour la maison ambulante, mais l'immeuble devra auparavant opérer une demi-révolution sur lui-même, car sans cela il se précipiterait à l'envers à front de rue. Ce dernier tour exigera une dizaine de jours, sauf complications imprévues.

La maison est construite en briques avec charpente en bois. Pendant toutes les opérations de transport, elle ne cesse pas d'être habitée.

(*La Tribune de Genève.*)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Capital Punishment in Switzerland.

With reference to my remarks on the Bernett murder some time ago, a dear friend and reader of the *S.O.* in Switzerland wrote me the following:—

"A lot is being written about that Bernett murder and capital punishment, but what ought to be ventilated much more seems to me the fact (if the paper I read it in is correct) that the prisoner in question was let loose, i.e., set free and put on the road, with 5 cts. or its equivalent in his pocket. I wonder what the authorities expected that individual to do on 5 cts. and a prison record, when it is well-nigh impossible for people with the best testimonials and decent pocket-money to find a livelihood, at present."

The above, provided, as my friend says, it is true, throws a lamentable light on some Swiss authority. That such a thing as turning a gaol-bird loose, with no means of subsistence, is possible in an enlightened country like Switzerland, is enough to make any Swiss feel horribly ashamed. If the laws or regulations permit of such a thing, surely it is the duty of the Government, Cantonal or Federal, to alter them.

Letters from Correspondents.

I was wondering silently whether any reader would refer to the article, reproduced from *The Times* in our issue of the 15th inst. Well done, Kenley!

How the Hillmen went forth to War.

I do not often look to the *Morning Post* for articles suitable for reproduction in a democratic paper, but the following (issue of Nov. 14th) is really good and withal likely to touch a responsive chord in the heart of any true Swiss:—

Three ski-runners, all crusted with frozen snow, trudged up wearily to the tavern of a prosperous village of the Simmental. It was a Sunday evening, a day when a referendum on some agricultural question had been voted. The tavern was filled with well-to-do cattle-owners and others.

Politics were the topic of the moment, and the villagers' opinions, forcibly emitted in the guttural Alpine dialect from every side, cut through the atmosphere laden with Swiss tobacco smoke. Inveigled into the argument by inquiries as to the trend of British public opinion, the strangers responded as best their knowledge of the language permitted. It was not long before one of them stated that Switzerland, being half-German, was now ready to espouse the German cause, just as she had done at the very outset of the Great War.

A rumble of protest followed the remark, and then conversation grew more subdued. It began to hark back to reminiscences of 1914. Two older men, sitting near the foreigners, began to expound the feelings of the Oberlanders on this thorny subject; how the historic dread of invasion still lived in the Swiss people; how the Bernese remembered the attacks of the Dukes of Burgundy and of Savoy; how they still bitterly resented the French conquest of 1797; how the northern cantons still spoke with horror of the passage of Austrian and Russian armies through their lands little more than a hundred years back.

"Yes," concluded one, "had you witnessed our call to arms in 1914, you might understand. As it is, you can never know. Politicians and financiers are one thing, but the people is another." Others recounted, one by one, in vivid terms those August scenes that they would never forget. Thus the strangers pieced the story together.

In every mountain valley for days men had been waiting for the call. Of a sudden it came. A brief telephone message: a hurried rush to the communal office: a shout for the drum. Soon the lad was running to the village square. He gave the first taps of that staccato call, so distinct from other military signals, which stabs the heart. Next the innkeeper and his two boys were racing to the church tower to sound on the tenor bell the tocsin, the message that it only utters in time of gravest need. The first crash of sound went swirling up the rocky gullies, rippled over the grassy pastures, till it broke on the margin of the sparkling snow.

Two hours later the men were assembling with rifle and bayonet, with two hundred rounds and three days' food on their backs, their pay-books and certificates stuck into their belts. A silent concourse watched that little parade. A newly

promoted sergeant-major gave orders in a quavering voice. All was ready. His order to turn and march was hardly intelligible; but they turned and went. Then suddenly the pent-up patriotism of the mountains could restrain itself no longer. A voice from the ranks struck up the old battle-psalm which had taken their forefathers into war six hundred years before: the chant that the soldiers of Burgundy and Savoy had learnt to dread: the chant that had brought victory to the defenders of the reformed faith of Berne.

Slowly the village street emptied itself into the wooden houses, as the last faint echo of the old hymn came floating up the valley. All believed that war had truly come, that their little country stood in danger.

A silence came over the tavern, and the smoke went curling straight up to the ceiling. Then another took up the tale. Little more than four years later the drum of war beat again in the mountain valleys. But this time the great bell remained mute, for the country was not in danger. This time, too, there was no singing; the men did not respond in the same fashion, even though the village squad was almost the same as it had been four years before. It was a cold and dreary day. Grim and sad, with the snowflakes driving into their faces, they moved off down the valley road, this time without a word, and the women stayed indoors. There was industrial trouble away down yonder, the rumblings of the general strike, the shadow of a Communist upheaval, the Russian poison that had infected the industrial towns of the north.

A few weeks later the men were back. But a bitter slur remained. The troops of Fribourg had marched into the old city of Berne; the Oberlanders had been moved away east. At such a time it was thought an evil thing to match the forces of order against their own kindred. But the elders of the village remained inconsolable for the shame that had come on their old town. Such a happening had never come over Berne, save only once when the ragged army of the French Directoire had ravaged her a century-and-a-quarter ago.

One old man shook his head, and added: "The drum of war may yet beat again, and that sooner than we think. Only those few months back when we went to vote against the Communists, against their capital levy, many of us felt that, if our votes were not strong enough to defeat these madmen, we might ourselves have sounded the drum in all our valleys. But the world might, this time, not have come from down below. For the houses we live in were built by our forefathers, the fields we till were wrenched by them from the barren earth, the pastures, were we tend our herds, were found by them among the rocks and glaciers. Now they are ours. What do those workers of the towns know of the mountains? We, indeed, are the children of the mountains, and, like the mountains which give us life, what we have we hold."

From the above, or its reproduction in these columns, it must not be taken that "Kyburg" is changing his mind. But, sometimes it does us good to have something which warms the heart a bit. Besides, my readers will, perhaps, believe me more readily when next time I have to appeal more to their brain-power again!

Stranded in a Swiss Lake.

It takes some doing, but, evidently, it can be done! *Daily Express* (Nov. 18th):—

Eighty-four passengers, among them many English visitors, had an adventure on the Lake of Geneva Sunday night, when the steamer Bonivard ran on a sandbank off Bouveret.

Another steamer was sent to the rescue, and took off the stranded passengers safely. The Bonivard was refloated on Monday by tugs.

Trade Spy in Switzerland.

Daily Express (Nov. 18th):— Much indignation has been aroused in Switzerland owing to the arrival of an official American commercial commission to control the receipts of Swiss firms dealing with America.

The "Neue Berner Zeitung" considers the visit of the commission as "commercial spying which should not be tolerated."

If the facts are as stated, it shows once more that our country, being so small, has to suffer a lot of indignities. America, i.e., the United States of America, has produced many fine fighters for Liberty, but, evidently, big business still holds sway, and before the golden calf principles of morality and liberty have to give way. It is really remarkable that countries like ante-war Germany and the U.S.A. should produce torch bearers of philosophy and political liberty, and yet, in the aggregate, be peopled by very crude and unlikeable human beings. Is it the law of contrasts?

The *Engineer* (Nov. 14th) publishes a long and splendidly illustrated article on "Swiss Federal Railways Outdoor Sub-Stations," well worth reading by those interested.

In Search of Good Acoustics.

Daily News (Nov. 17th):— The British Government was recently asked by the League of Nations to help them in planning

their new Council Chamber at Geneva so that the speakers may be heard by Press and public. The League is anxious there should not be a repetition of the difficulties experienced at the opening of the London County Hall. The question was taken up by the British Department of Scientific Research, who referred the matter to the Building Research Board. That body in turn placed the problem in the hands of the Acoustics Committee, which has been conducting experiments for some time past at Harlesden.

They have been experimenting with substances as various as canvas screens, wool, felt, plaster, and cork, their object being to determine if these materials placed over the wall of a debating chamber help to make speakers audible. The result of these researches will be discussed at a meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

I hope these labours will succeed. It is rather important, especially in this case, that speakers should be heard easily. If only somebody would invent walls that translate the speech straightaway into the language best understood by the listener. There is scope for some genius!

Macadamised Road.

The *Amateur Mechanic and Work* (Nov. 15th) has the following, which will interest all users of the roads:—

In Locle, Switzerland, according to the "Chemiker-Zeitung," a macadamised road was built in which the sand that was used in making the top surface of the road was first treated with a solution of water-glass. About 120 litres of ordinary water-glass were used per cubic meter of sand. After the application the top surface of the road was well rolled, and it was found that the water-glass had penetrated to a depth of 10 centimetres and cemented the materials together into a hard mass. This road withstood very heavy traffic for a period of three years.

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

In view of the renewed crisis in the embroidery industry, the firms concerned have approached the Stickerei Treuhänd Genossenschaft with a view to obtaining payment of the balance of the subsidy granted by the Government to the industry in October, 1922. This balance amounts to one million francs out of the original five millions, and the Federal Council have provisionally agreed to pay out an amount of Frs. 500,000.

The present state of the industry is illustrated by the position of the A.G. Stickereiwerke Arbon in St. Gall, which, in spite of drastic reductions of staff and restriction of expenses, was again unable to distribute any dividend for the business year 1923-24. The gross manufacturing profit has, nevertheless, advanced appreciably and amounted to more than one million francs, as compared with Frs. 662,552, and more than a quarter of a million could be put aside for writing off depreciations.

The directors of Adolphe Saurer in Arbon report that, after writing off a sum of Frs. 934,627, the remaining debit balance of Frs. 940,425 on the year 1923-24, together with Frs. 1,309,132 loss carried forward from last year—making in all a total debit of Frs. 2,249,555—will be carried forward to new account. The unfavourable results are principally due to the unsatisfactory degree of occupation during the year in the department responsible for the manufacture of embroidery machinery. Further, the low prices ruling in the market for motor lorries—another speciality of the firm—has contributed to the present state of affairs.

The accounts of Gebr. Sulzer A.G. in Winterthur for the year ended 31st of March, 1924, close with a net profit of Frs. 282,000. From this has to be deducted a debit balance carried forward from the year 1922-23, so that the net available profit—which the directors propose to carry forward to the new year—amounts to Frs. 110,000.

The Sulzer-Unternehmungen, A.G., the holding company, closes the year with a deficit which, including that carried forward from last year, amounts to Frs. 1,900,000. The report emphasises that business has been improving since the beginning of the present year. Prices are not yet by any means satisfactory, but the degree of employment in the works is now more regular and on a sounder basis generally.

STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

BONDS.		Nov. 18	Nov. 25
Swiss Confederation 3% 1903	...	74.75%	74.80%
Swiss Confederation 5% 1923	...	99.00%	98.83%
Federal Railways A—K 3 1/2%	...	78.57%	78.85%
Canton Basle-Stadt 5 1/2% 1921	...	100.50%	100.83%
Canton Fribourg 3% 1892...	...	70.25%	69.50%

SHARES.		Nom.	Nov. 18	Nov. 25
		Frs.	Frs.	Frs.
Swiss Bank Corporation	...	500	661	663
Crédit Suisse	...	500	701	697
Union de Banques Suisses	...	500	551	556
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	...	1000	3090	3050
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique C. F. Bally S.A.	...	1000	1907	1877
Fabrique de Machines Oerlikon	...	500	1165	1169
Entreprises Sulzer	...	1000	667	687
S.A. Brown Boveri (new)	...	500	288	301
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	...	200	200	203
Choc. Suisses Peter-Callier-Köhler	...	100	157	159
Comp. de Navig. n. sur le Lac Léman	...	500	500	507

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