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HOME NEWS

At their united sitting last Thursday the two Houses re-elected the whole of the Federal Council. At the top of the poll was Federal Councillor Haab, who received 175 out of 211 votes. The former vice-president, Dr. Heinrich Häberlin, was elected Federal President with 151 out of 158 votes; he was born in Weinfelden (Thurgau) in 1868 and is the youngest member of the Federal Council, which he joined in 1920 to replace the retiring Federal Councillor Calonder. (Most of our London readers will recall Dr. Häberlin's visit last July, when he was entertained by the City Swiss Club.) — At the close of the present mandate all the seven Federal Councillors will have occupied the highest position in Switzerland, and a new "series" will commence again with the doyen of the Council, Dr. Guiseppe Motta, who is now occupying the vice-presidency.

The national debt of the Confederation to the end of the present year amounts to 2,086 million francs, nearly 114 millions having been paid off since 1924, when the figure was at its highest. This works out roughly at 594 francs per head of population, against 75 frs. in 1914, that is to say, an eightfold increase during the last decade. This does not include the outstanding loans on account of the Swiss Federal Railways, which total about 2½ milliard francs.

A marked increase in unemployment is recorded for the month of November, those officially registered numbering 15,760, against 12,219 in October. The building, machinery and textile trades are chiefly affected.

In their endeavour to provide work for the abnormal number of unemployed, the cantons of Geneva and St. Gall are receiving from the Federal Council financial assistance to the tune of Frs. 170,000 and Frs. 600,000 respectively.

Several urban organisations at St. Gall, embracing property owners, traders and retailers, have petitioned the Cantonal and Federal authorities with a request for common action in order to arrest the depopulation of the town and the impoverishment of the community, caused by the constantly increasing number of vacant houses and business premises.

According to recent statistics the present value of the embroidery exports is about a third of the figure for 1913, and the number of workmen employed in the industry has fallen from 72,000 to under 35,000.

Thanks to improved conditions in the industry the Swiss watch manufacturers have renounced the credit of Frs. 300,000 which the Confederation voted in order to enable them to participate in the forthcoming jubilee exhibition at Philadelphia.

An international enquiry is at present being conducted at Berne into the mysterious theft from American postal bags, which took place on Dec. 9th on the Paris-Milan-Trieste express. The loss is said to be over Frs. 200,000, and though it is asserted that the robbery did not take place on Swiss territory, Switzerland will have to bear its share of this amount if the crime cannot conclusively be proved as having been perpetrated in one of the other transit countries.

In felling an old apple tree near Rünkhofen (Berne) a hoard of gold and silver coins amounting to Frs. 1,109 was unearched. It is stated that this refers to a charge of theft for which, as far back as 1870, a farmhand was sentenced to 2½ years' hard labour, although at the time he vigorously protested his innocence. As the man in question only died about five years ago, having evidently failed to secure the treasure he was credited for having hidden, a miscarriage of justice seems to have occurred.

The taxicab drivers of Geneva are threatening to declare a strike, as those on duty outside the Cornavin station were fined for having, on a cold night, deserted their taxis in order to warm themselves at the station bar.

As the result of a preliminary investigation, a garage and automobile proprietor of Geneva is

to be charged with manslaughter. He had arranged last month in connection with a motor excursion to Pont de la Paille, near St. Julien, a revolver shooting competition; a street indicator of the Touring Club was used as a target, and one of the shots rebounded and unfortunately fatally wounded one of the party, a Mrs. Mayer-Kellenberger.

For accidentally shooting and killing his brother with an army rifle which he was cleaning, being unaware that it still contained a cartridge, Franz Wyser, of Huggervald, was sentenced by the Solothurn assizes to two years' imprisonment.

Mr. Louis Reichenbach, the principal of the well-known embroidery export business of the same name, died in St. Gall at the age of 76.

A sexagenarian, M. Léon Oueloz, who is in business at Porrentruy, has died from Tetanus. One day last week he missed the last train and was obliged to walk home, when in the intense cold his hands got frostbitten. Soon after being admitted to the hospital he developed tetanus.

Following an operation for ear trouble, the painter Hans Widmer, of Hochstetten, died in Berne at the age of 53.

The "Wurzenbethli," whose real name is Elisabeth Ackermann, died in Mels (St. Gall) at the age of 101.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Die berufliche Gliederung der schweiz. Bevölkerung.
Auf Grund der schweiz. Volkszählungsergebnisse ergab sich auf 1. Dezember 1920 ein Bestand von 3,880,000 Einwohnern. Gegenüber dem Jahr 1860 ergibt sich eine Bevölkerungszunahme von 1,368,000 Personen. Besonders interessant ist es, zu verfolgen, welche starke Umschichtung in der beruflichen Gliederung stattgefunden hat. Während noch im Jahre 1860 1,115,000 Personen oder 44,4 Prozent der schweizerischen Bevölkerung in der Urproduktion, vorzugsweise der Landwirtschaft, tätig waren und 997,000 Personen oder 39,8 Prozent in Handel, Industrie und Gewerbe, hat sich die Zahl dieser letzteren im Jahre 1920 auf 1,979,000 Personen oder auf 51 Prozent erhöht. Selbständig erwerbende Personen zählte man im Jahre 1920 543,650. Personen mit unselbständigem Erwerb waren 1920 1,308,403 vorhanden. Der grösste Teil der Bevölkerungszunahme in den letzten Jahren ist somit von Handel, Industrie und Gewerbe absorbiert worden und zwar infolge der stetigen Konzentration, welche die moderne Wirtschaft mit sich bringt, in der Stellung unselbständigen Erwerbs. Eine grosse Zahl der selbständig Erwerbenden gehört überdies bei uns dem Kleinbürgertum an (kleine Gewerbetreibende, Handwerker, kleine Landwirte). Deren Selbständigkeit ist mehr eine rechtliche als eine wirtschaftliche und deren soziale und wirtschaftliche Lage ist von derjenigen der Arbeiter und der Mehrzahl der Angestellten nicht sehr verschieden. (Neues Winterthurer Tagbl.)

Für die Toten. — Eine Badener Dame hat dem Gemeinderat von Baden 500 Franken übergeben mit dem Zwecke, dass aus dem Zins jedem Toten, der ohne Angehörige in der Stadt bestattet wird, ein Kranz im Preise von Fr. 10—12 auf den Sarg zu legen sei. Sollte der Zins hiezu nicht ausreichen, so soll der nötige Betrag vom Kapital genommen werden. Die Fondstifterin erklärte sich bereit, die Summe jeweilen wieder zu ersetzen. (Wohler Anzeiger.)

Ein Preisausschreiben. — Die Bürgerpartei der Stadt Bern hat eine Zuweisung von 400 Fr. erhalten mit der Zweckbestimmung, dass ein Preisausschreiben veranstaltet werden soll über Stimm-beteiligung und Stimmzwang. Es soll darin untersucht werden, ob sich für die Gemeinde Bern die Einführung des Stimmzwanges empfiehlt und wenn ja, in welcher Form. Das Preisergericht besteht aus den Herren Prof. Dr. Karl Geiser, Prof. Dr. Burkhardt und Prof. Dr. Milliet. Mögen sie das grosse Rätsel lösen. (Freie Rätler.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

By the time you read these Notes, Christmas has been and gone once more, leaving, I trust, happy memories in the heart of each of you.

Looking through my Gleanings this week, I find that nearly all of them are about the Winter Sports in Switzerland, which, this season, seem to be a greater attraction than ever.

I should like to hear of a newspaper published

in the United Kingdom or even the Irish Free State which did not, at one time or another, publish alluring reports of the fascination of this wonderful, health-giving activity in our Swiss Alps.

Well, Switzerland can do with all the money these tourists take to her, for her industries, or some of her most important ones at least, are sorely handicapped by high customs tariffs of other States. How this works in a vicious circle is well illustrated in the following article by Dr. Arthur Steinmann, of Zurich (*Manchester Guardian Commercial*, 10th Dec.):—

Switzerland: Foreign Tariff Handicaps.

Switzerland has developed a considerable woollen industry, but she is compelled, notwithstanding her extensive agricultural industry and cattle and sheep breeding, to make use of foreign raw materials. The countries supplying these are, first and foremost, Australia, the La Plata States, and South Africa. The home production of wool is very small. The number of sheep decreased from 447,000 in January, 1866, to 245,000 in 1921. While the average annual consumption of wool for the years 1911-1913 amounted to 5,450 tons, it rose in 1916 to 12,650 tons, and sank in 1919-1920 to 4,715 tons annually, including the small amount of wool produced in Switzerland. In the year 1924, however, nearly 8,000 tons, of a value of 54 million francs, was imported. The spinning of woollen yarns and worsted is almost equal in amount.

The worsted spinning trade, the production of which before the war was estimated at, in round figures, 22 million francs in value, furnished yarns for weaving, embroidery, and knitting, as well as for smallware manufacturing. Its products are highly valued both at home and abroad. In the first place, it supplies the worsted weaving industry of Switzerland with the half-manufactured material for the production of ladies' dress goods, muslins, poplins, crêpes, etc. A speciality is the production of worsted knitting yarns. Export before the war averaged 1,100 tons, of the value of 10 million francs, annually, and after falling off during the years of crisis it attained 1,336 tons, of the value of 28.9 million francs, in 1924. In these figures the wool waste, noils, and tops, which in the same year were exported to the amount of 3,370 tons, of a value of 14.7 million francs, are not included. In 1916 and 1917 the products of the Swiss worsted spinning industry were largely claimed by France. In normal trade the principal exports go about equally to England, Germany, and Asia. It is interesting to note that at the same time 880 tons of the worsted yarn, of the value of 14.4 million francs, were imported. The spinning of woollen yarns in Switzerland is not an independent industry, the spinning plants being, without exception, attached to the weaving concerns and working for their own consumption.

Besides the weaving of worsted, the weaving of woollen goods, the cloth, counterpane, and carpet industries, as well as the manufacture of felt, are represented. While the worsted weaving trade produces the ladies' fine dress goods and light fabrics, bleached, dyed, and printed, weighing less than 300 grammes per square metre, the cloth or woollen yarn weaving industry, besides all wool or half-wool men's clothing and ladies' dress goods, from either worsted or woollen yarns, produces military and other official cloth in part of the finest quality. The coarser wools serve to provide the country population with strong and durable fabrics for clothing. The manufacture of friezes and various sports goods has also attained considerable importance. The woollen industry generally is actively supported by a highly developed dyeing and finishing industry capable of turning out work of the highest quality.

The war greatly increased the home demand for goods, thanks to the increased civil demand and the issue of new uniforms to the army. Record deliveries signalled the revictualing of the blockaded districts in the first year of the peace, 1919, raising the exports to 62.5 million francs. The value of exports in 1913 was 5.8 million francs; in 1920, a year after the record year, 31.7 millions; in 1921, 15.7 millions; and in 1924, 16.5 million francs (631 tons). The almost prohibitive Customs tariffs of Germany, France, and other States, and the secession of England from Free Trade, threaten the position of the Swiss woollen industry as an exporting trade more and more. For this reason Switzerland may be constrained to protect the woollen industry on the home market, and that this should bring increased sales is shown by the fact that not less than 2,270 tons of foreign