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HOME NEWS

The imposition of a special tax on foreigners residing in the canton of Zurich (to be levied in pursuance of a popular decision taken on Nov. 25th, 1923) will probably be the subject of another plebiscite, as the authorities are not in favour of this impost.

The aviator Mittelholzer and his mechanic, who left Zurich on Dec. 18th and covered about 11,000 kilometres in 71 hours, have now returned home by rail, their machine having been left behind in Persia.

Divisional Commander A. Bührer, of Schaffhausen, and his assistant have been placed under arrest by the local police on a charge of defalcations and misappropriation of public funds during the last few years.

A Ticinese, named Pedrazzini, from Gerra-Versasca, is the lucky winner of a prize of half-a-million lire in an Italian lottery; he is at present an inmate of a hospital at Turin.

A second-class railway carriage, that had been shunted on to a siding at a suburban railway station near Berne, has been discovered as having been for three weeks the haunt and depository of a young man who specialized in secretly robbing local churches for a livelihood; he has been sentenced to twenty months' imprisonment.

A serious motor accident occurred last Sunday at Gommiswald, near Uznach. The car missed the edge of the road, and all the five occupants were thrown out. Two of the latter, Gemeinderat Schreiber-Gmür, from Amden, and a master baker named Tschirky, from Schmerikon, died from their injuries on the way to the hospital.

A society has now been definitely formed in Zurich with the object of creating and maintaining a zoological garden in that town.

Tausendjährige Seide.—Die Kirche von Zurzach birgt in ihrem Kirchenschatz einen kleinen Stoffresten von grossem Werte. Dieser sogen. Antilopenstoff scheint nach den Untersuchungen von Prof. E. A. Stückelberg in Basel ein Ueberrest zu sein von einem Seidenstoff, den der burgundische König Konrad (937—993) und seine zweite Gemahlin, Königin Mathilde von Frankreich, der heiligen Verena in Zurzach als Weibegabe dargebracht haben. Konrad war ein Sohn der in der Volkstradition sehr berühmten gewordenen Königin Berta, die das Volk spinnen lehrte. Der Stoff in Zurzach scheint orientalischen Ursprungs zu sein. Er wurde früher zum Bedecken des Heiligensarges verwendet, beim Bildersturm als Reliquie gerettet und 1549 inventarisiert als ein "sidin gespriggelt tuoch." Jahrhundertlang lag er in einer kleinen Holzlade, diese in grösserem Holzschrein, und letzterer wohlverschlossen im silbernen Verenaschrein. 1923 wurde nun der Stoff in Basel photographiert und zwischen zwei Kristallplatten gefasst. (Volksblatt.)

AUSLANDSCHWEIZER-TAG.

(Journée des Suisses à l'Étranger.)

For the eighth annual gathering, which takes place at Basle on Monday, April 20th, the City Swiss Club has elected as its official delegates Messrs. J. C. Rathgeb and C. A. Aeschmann.

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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

A Happy Easter to all our readers!
Instead of an Easter sermon by myself, I will give you a real treat:—

MARIENLIEDER.

I.

Durch feuchte Wolken glänzt ein Sonnenstrahl,
Der weite Raum, ein heller Freudenraum.

Die Bäume stehen alle lichtbereit,
Maria trägt ein weisses Feierkleid.

Sie steht und sinnt, die Blicke aufgetan,
Und fängt mit einem Mal zu tanzen an,

Ein süsses, sanftes Gleiten hin und her,
Die keusch erblühten Lippen lächeln schwer,

Die zarten Arme wölben sich empor.
Gott Vater schreitet durch das Himmelstor

Und segnet ernst und mild der Erde Leib.
Maria steht und ahnt sich zitternd: Weib.

II.

Maria wiegt ihr Kindlein zart,
Der Weg ist steil, der Weg ist hart,
Sie hebt das Kindlein an die Brust,
Ach, bitter selbst des Lebens Lust.

Der Abend tritt durchs Fenster ein,
O dunkles Kreuz im goldenen Schein,
O Angst der Welt . . . der Vater sagt,
Das Kindlein lächelt froh bewegt.

III.

Früchte schwellen, reif das Korn,
Rosen über jedem Dorn.

Durch der Felder hohe Zeit
Geht Maria. Einsamkeit.

Hoch der Halm, die Aehre schwer,
"Segne unser Brot, o Herr."

Tief im Gold des Mohnes Rot,
"Rette uns vor Angst und Not."

Eine Wolke schattet leis,
"Schütze unsres Lebens Reis."

Streicht ein Lüfchen durch das Meer,
Legt die Halme kreuz und quer.

Eine Sichel klingt und geht,
Und Maria sinnt und schweigt,

Schaut, ob sie den Schnitter fänd,
"Schenk uns, Herr, ein selig End."

IV.

Maria wandelt über Schnee,
Ihr Kindlein starb in Kreuzesweh.

Der Himmel flammt in Abendglut,
Färbt ihre Füsse rot wie Blut.

Sie löst die schweren Haare auf
Und geht bergab und geht bergauf.

Ihr Antlitz ist so mild und weiss,
"Eia poepia" singt sie leis.

"Eia poepia, Königskind,
Die Nacht bricht an, kalt bläst der Wind.

Eia poepia, schlaf nun ein
In meines Herzens dunklem Schrein.

Am Morgen schenkt die Sonne dir
Aufs Neu der Krone Strahlenzier.

Du gehst in purpurgoldnem Kleid,
In Glanz und Ehr und Herrlichkeit."

V.

In eines Kapellchens sanftem Rund
Steht eine Maria, zu nächtiger Stund—

So geht die Sage—verlässt sie das Haus
Und geht in den Gottesacker hinaus.

Und wo ein Kindlein schlummt im Grab,
Neigt sie sich tief zu den Blumen hinab

Und küsst die Erde und flüstert leis,
Da regt es und hebt es sich selber weiss.

Ein Englein schwebt an Marias Brust,
Sie küsst es voll Liebe und Mutterlust.

Sie labt es still, denn der Weg ist weit
Vom Grab bis hinauf in die Ewigkeit.

Dann lässt sie es ziehn und steht zur Stund
In des kühlen Kapellchens sanftem Rund,

Und nur ein Blumenblättchen im Haar
Verrät, dass sie draussen im Garten war.

MARIA BRETSCHER.

To-day's Great Thought.

"We always stand a few paces too near ourselves and a few paces too far from our neighbours. Hence we judge men too much in the lump, and ourselves too much by individual, occasional, insignificant features and circumstances."—NIETZSCHE.

Napoleonic Relics,

at least those relating to the Third Napoleon, have not all perished in the Baker Street fire of the other week. Quite a few interesting ones are kept at Arenenberg, and well do I remember my grandfather—a worthy Thurgauer—talking of the old days when Napoleon was a member of the Schützenverein and little thought of the future Napoleon III. Some of these relics seem to have tempted a burglar. The *Daily Express* (April 6) has the following:—

The criminal court at Frauenfeld sentenced a burglar named Ochsner to seven months' imprisonment for breaking into the famous Château Arenenberg, on Lake Constance, last December, and stealing the valuable historic relics belonging to the Napoleonic period.

The stolen articles, all of which have been recovered, included works of art, tapestries and paintings which the Empress Eugenie presented to the Swiss nation with the château in 1906. Ochsner, who did not know the value of his booty, aroused suspicion when he offered a valuable tapestry for £5 to an art dealer, who informed the police.

English Poets and Switzerland.

T.P.'s & Cassell's Weekly (28th March):—

I should be glad to know which of Longfellow's poems are concerned with Switzerland; also of any other poets who have written about Switzerland.—T. W. L. H., Anglesey.

[Longfellow's "Golden Legend" has one of its later scenes in Switzerland. Byron's "Manfred" has some scenes among the Alps, and there is his "Prisoner of Chillon" and passages in "Childe Harold." Browning has also "La Saisiaz," a rather long poem, the scene of which is on Lake Geneva. John Addington Symonds has written sonnets on Swiss subjects. Thomas Campbell's "Theodorie" is another poem on a Swiss story. There is Wordsworth's famous sonnet on the subjugation of Switzerland and several poems on Switzerland in his "Memories of a Tour on the Continent, 1820." "Monte Rosa," by Roden Noel, is a good modern poem; and many poets have scattered references to the Alps in their work.]

I thought the above might interest not a few of my readers, because it always gives additional pleasure to read foreign poets extolling the beauties of one's country.

The late Dr. A. de Watteville

has the following necrologue in *Nature* (March 21st):—

Dr. de Watteville, whose death, at the age of seventy-eight, occurred in Switzerland on Feb. 24th last, was a prominent member of the medical profession in London between twenty and thirty years ago. A Swiss by birth, scion of one of the oldest families in Switzerland, he was an Englishman by education, and qualified for the medical profession. He specialised in neurology, and more particularly in electro-therapeutics, which he did much to establish on a scientific basis. His work on "Medical Electricity," which ran through two editions—the second in 1884—established his reputation as the chief authority on the subject in Great Britain. He specially insisted on measurements of current strength as the essential condition of a rational application of electricity, and led to the milliampère being adopted as the electro-therapeutic unit by the International Congress of Electricians.

It was, however, as editor of *Brain* that Dr. de Watteville found his chief interest and occupation. In 1883 he became associated as co-editor with the original founders and editors of this important journal—the late Sir J. C. Bucknill, Dr. Hughlings Jackson, Sir J. Crichton-Browne, and Sir David Ferrier—and in 1886 was appointed sole editor, when *Brain* became the official journal of the newly founded Neurological Society. This post he held until 1900. On his resignation the council of the Neurological Society, by unanimous resolution, paid him the following well-merited tribute:—

"The Council accepts with great regret Dr. de Watteville's resignation of the Editorship of *Brain*, and desires to take this opportunity of recording the deep debt of gratitude that the Society owes him for the way in which he has conducted the journal for the past twenty years. The Council feels that parting with Dr. de Watteville is an event of great moment to the Society, for he has not only brought *Brain* to a high standard of perfection and secured

for it a great European reputation, but even the existence of the Journal at the present time is due to his energetic action at a critical juncture in 1880. Moreover, the Council is mindful that the Society itself took origin on Dr. de Watteville's initiative at a meeting held at his house on November 14, 1885."

Soon after resigning the editorship of *Brain*, Dr. de Watteville left London and went to reside in Switzerland, and spent the remainder of his life in quiet study and contemplation among the beautiful surroundings of his native land. Dr. de Watteville was a man of wide culture and great force of character, charitable and self-sacrificing almost to a fault, and the outspoken foe of quackery and pretence of every description.

Interest and Capital Destruction.

The monthly bulletin of the Swiss Bank Corporation, to which I drew attention two weeks ago, still gives food for thought to many British newspapers. The following is interesting and incidentally hopeful! *Star* (25th March):—

Interesting comments on the relatively high levels of interest rates in various countries are made in the monthly bulletin of the Swiss Bank Corporation. It is pointed out that the great increase in rates since the war is due to the wholesale destruction of capital liabilities, incurred for entirely unproductive purposes. The wars of the French revolutionary periods led to a shortage of money, and from 1800 to 1815 rates on well-secured loans often exceeded ten per cent. Rates subsequently declined as savings accumulated, but the advent of the industrial era of railways and steamships, etc., between 1840 and 1850, again caused rates to rise. The funds sunk in these new enterprises led to a further accumulation of savings, and rates after 1870 again declined.

Another rise commenced to operate from the commencement of the twentieth century, and affected the market until the outbreak of the war. In the meantime, inflation has been followed by an increase in interest rates. Assuming that there are no more economic upheavals, the view is taken in this survey that the gradual formation of new capital, which is more rapid nowadays, will overtake demand and result in a steady decline in interest rates.

Swiss Wireless Laws.

Glasgow Evening Citizen (24th March):—

Sir,—I have been instructed to advise intending travellers to Switzerland, through the courtesy of your paper, of the existing regulations in regard to wireless apparatus for use during their stay in Switzerland. A request has to be submitted through the nearest Swiss Consulate, Name and Christian name, address of applicant, which should contain the following information: date of birth, town and country of residence, date of arrival in and leaving Switzerland, places of sojourn in Switzerland.—The Consul for Switzerland: Alfred Oswald.

Now, I confess, with all due respect to Mr. Oswald, in the above form the information is rather bewildering. I presume it means those tourists who wish to take their own receiving sets, etc., with them. But why not say so, and why, if my explanation is correct, ask for their birth-date? Really, bureaucracy in Switzerland seems to be closely related to that in other countries, and I feel quite—oh, quite sure that our diplomatic representatives have no difficulty at all in keeping up pleasant relations between the bureaucrats of all the countries. Oh, Diplomacy, what absurdities are committed in thy name!

Writing about diplomacy and bureaucracy at Easter time is no light matter, believe me, and gives one quite a thirst. How refreshing after that to come across a paragraph dealing with Alps and Alpine Flora! I can almost breathe the pure air, feel the strong, cold winds—the latter, of course, is never difficult in this country!

Expedition to Everest.

Daily Express (26th March):—

Two famous Swiss guides, Lockmatter and Perren, have left Zermatt for Rotterdam in order to join and lead a Dutch research expedition to the Himalayas.

The expedition, which is bound for Karachi, will make Kashmir its base of ascent. It will collect Alpine fauna and flora unknown in the European Alps.

Lockmatter has been to the Himalayas on two previous occasions, the last in 1914, with an English Alpinist, Mr. Meade, when the couple climbed Mount Kamet (25,373 feet), which is one of the most difficult in the range.

The expedition will ascend the lower slopes of Mount Everest, but will not attempt its conquest.

English scientists in India may join the Dutch expedition.

Talking of Alps reminds me of Avalanches. My readers will perhaps remember a very interesting article on the subject not very long ago. This week I found another one, equally interesting, in *Popular Science* (17th March), entitled

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The Awful Avalanche—Some Swiss Disasters.

The Swiss people call avalanches "lauwine," and they are sometimes so called in English. In one of his poems Lord Byron spoke of the mountains as places "where roar the thundering lauwine," though he probably meant no more than the snow avalanches which are frequently seen in summer by the traveller.

The word, according to Mr. John A. Cass, in a recent paper which is quoted, has a broader meaning, however, and includes those enormous masses of earth and rock which not infrequently become loosened from the cliffs and descend into the valleys, carrying death and destruction far and wide.

In some parts of the country avalanches of either sort are so likely to occur at any time that the people guard against them by planting extensive forests on the hillsides. In some cases strong bulwarks of masonry have been erected between the towns and the mountains.

Despite all precautions, however, it is not unusual for lives to be lost and single houses to be destroyed. There are several cases on record where entire villages have been buried beyond all possibility of excavation.

On the Bernina Pass, a great highway which leads from Switzerland to Italy, the traveller still has his attention directed to the spot where, many years ago, a village named Wille Morti was buried by an avalanche of earth and rock from the slope of a neighbouring mountain. Very little is known concerning the disaster, for it is one of those sad cases where neither man, woman nor child escaped to tell the story.

On the road from the Italian lakes into Switzerland, by the great Maloja Pass, one sees the site of a catastrophe even more appalling than that already mentioned: more appalling because more extensive.

The village of Plurs must have been very pleasant for situation, for in front of it a mountain torrent kept up its unceasing roar; while at a little distance in the background rose the huge cliffs of Monte Conto. It must have been a prosperous town, too, for early in the seventeenth century it sheltered a population of 2,430 souls. In the autumn of 1618 it was noticed that masses of earth and rock fell with unusual frequency, and a number of fissures were seen to form and widen in the mountain. But the people, disregarding these admonitions, continued their usual pursuits till one night a terrific landslide buried them and their possessions beneath a pile of debris more than sixty feet deep.

So utter was the destruction that no attempt has ever been made at excavation. The spot is now covered with a beautiful grove of chestnut trees, among whose branches the nimble squirrels play, and at the foot of which boys and girls now search for nuts.

Another example, not so destructive to life and property, but more striking, from its having twice happened in the same place, may be noticed in the valley which leads to the village of Zermatt. Here, in 1787, a little town of 140 houses was completely destroyed by an avalanche of snow from the Weishorn Mountain.

Years passed, and the snow had all melted, the debris had been cleared away, and another and larger village was built on the same spot. Here the people lived in peace and safety, and had perhaps quite forgotten the first disaster, when suddenly, one afternoon in 1819, another avalanche of ice and snow from the same mountain came down upon them, burying 118 houses, together with many people. The house of the village pastor stood a little apart from the others, and so escaped destruction; but such an enormous quantity of snow was lodged in his garden that it did not entirely disappear till two years later.

Returning now to the region of Eastern Switzerland, we find another case quite unlike any that have yet been mentioned.

Many years ago, on what was known as the Forcola Pass, the little town of Le Rovine stood at the foot of the towering mountain. It contained about 300 inhabitants, who were occupied as cattleherders and farmers. They also carried on quite a business in the way of entertaining people who were obliged to pass that way. They had, however, come to have a bad repu-

tation, and were supposed to be capable of almost any crime. Travellers who were obliged to spend the night there were provided with only the meanest food, but were compelled to pay for it the most exorbitant prices.

Indeed, the catalogue of evil deeds of which the people of the town were guilty was a long one, and it is said that they were frequently warned that some terrible judgment would be sent upon them unless they reformed. Be that as it may, it is certain that on June 13th, 1486, an earthquake shook the mountain violently, and a fearful avalanche buried the town, with all its inhabitants, in one common grave.

But the most remarkable instance of such disasters yet remains to be spoken of. In the very centre of Switzerland, not far from the famous city of Lucerne, is a tract of country bearing the general name of Goldau. It included several villages, whose situations were of extreme beauty, for in front of them lay the charming little Lake of Lowertz, and behind them rose the Rossberg Mountain to a height of more than 5,000 feet.

This mountain consists of layers of conglomerate rock, made up of rounded limestones mixed with flinty pebbles imbedded in a sort of calcareous cement, alternating with layers of sand three or four feet in thickness. Not infrequently these sand-beds become disintegrated by the action of water percolating through them, and masses of rock, deprived of their support in this way, are occasionally precipitated into the valley. It was this on a large scale that caused the disaster.

The summer of 1806 had been an exceptionally rainy one, and on September 2nd a stratum of rock measuring more than two miles in length, 3,000 feet in width and 100 feet in thickness, became loosened and fell upon the doomed villages from a height of 3,000 feet. Four villages were utterly destroyed, and upward of 500 people were buried beneath the ruins.

Nor did the destruction end there, for the avalanche swept resistingly on till it reached the lake, one-fourth of the bed of which was filled up by the debris, while the islands were totally submerged, and a wave eighty feet in height broke upon and destroyed all the buildings on the opposite shore.

These are but a few of the instances in which the mountains have sent down ruin upon the peaceful valleys of this lovely land. But, notwithstanding all this, the country is a prosperous one. The people possess an energy which does not quail readily in the face of difficulties.

And may the coming avalanche season deal gently with the dear folks on the homesteads!

Once more: *A Happy Eastertide to you all!*

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