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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The Socialist Party has deposited a motion asking the Federal Council to prepare and publish a list of those members of the two Houses of the Swiss Parliament who are directors of public companies or derive pecuniary benefits from their relationship with other commercial or industrial undertakings.

Through relinquishing as from the beginning of this year the existing transit fees for motor cars, the canton of Uri is sacrificing an annual income of about Frs. 300,000.

At the instance of the Federal Council, the winning gymnasts belonging to the Swiss team competing at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam have each been presented with a 100 Frs. piece as a Christmas present.

A considerable amount of theft having taken place at post offices in Geneva, a number of arrests have been effected; these include a postal clerk and former town councillor, who had been spending the proceeds at Nice in company with a ballet girl.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**L'hommage de l'Académie des sciences morales à Gustave Ador, Eugène Ritter et Francis De Crue.**— Au cours d'une de ses dernières séances l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques a entendu prononcer l'éloge de trois citoyens genevois morts récemment et qui appartenaient à l'Institut: M. Gustave Ador, comme membre associé, MM. Eugène Ritter et Francis de Crue, comme correspondants.

Voici en quels termes s'est exprimé M. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, président:—

M. Gustave Ador était, parmi les membres associés de l'Académie, un de ceux dont nous étions les plus fiers. Né à Cologne, près de Genève, en 1874, il fut élu, comme on sait, président de la Confédération helvétique. A la mort de Gustave Moynier (qui fut aussi notre confrère), fondateur du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, Gustave Ador devint le président de ce comité, qui, malgré son caractère purement privé, a joué pendant la grande guerre un rôle d'une importance capitale. Il n'a pas hésité à rappeler au respect des conventions signées ceux des Etats belligérants qui les violaient. Les gouvernements en reconnaissaient l'autorité et ils entretenaient avec lui de constants rapports.

C'est surtout à Gustave Ador que le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge a dû ce prestige, dont il a fait le plus noble usage. Personne n'ignore le merveilleux parti que M. Ador a su tirer de cette organisation pour répondre aux appels suppliants qui lui arrivaient de toutes parts. Il ne suffisait pas au Comité international de la Croix-Rouge de venir au secours des blessés et des malades; il se préoccupait aussi de ces autres victimes que sont les prisonniers de guerre. Dès le mois d'août 1914, le Comité avait constitué à Genève une agence internationale de prisonniers. Bientôt on y reçut trente mille lettres par jour. Elle procurait aux familles tous les renseignements possibles sur les disparus. Grâce à elle, en maintes occasions, sur le rapport de ses envoyés spéciaux, la condition des prisonniers, dans certains camps, put être améliorée. C'est elle encore qui, à force de patiente insistence, a fini par obtenir l'échange des grands blessés, l'internement en Suisse des prisonniers malades, l'échange des pères de famille, etc. Que de douleurs, que d'angoisses, que de tortures sans nom ont été abrégées ou adoucies par l'activité infatigable de Gustave Ador et du groupe dévoué d'hommes et de femmes qu'il dirigeait! Esprit fertile en ressources, net et précis, voyant haut et loin, rompu aux affaires, habile à résoudre vite les difficultés d'ordre pratique et les problèmes d'organisation, Gustave Ador a su, pendant plus de quatre années, mener de front son action politique et sa tâche d'humanité, chaque jour plus complexe et plus lourde. L'histoire n'oubliera pas son nom.

M. Eugène Ritter, correspondant de la section de morale, est mort en juillet dernier, à l'âge de quatre-vingt-dix ans. Sa longue et belle vie a été

consacrée tout entière à l'enseignement, en même temps qu'à de nombreux travaux d'histoire littéraire, d'érudition et de philosophie. Ce sont surtout les études originales de M. Eugène Ritter sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau qui ont porté au loin sa réputation; non seulement les trois volumes bien connus qui ont pour titre *la Famille de J.-J. Rousseau*, *Recherches sur les Confessions et la correspondance de Rousseau*, *la Jeunesse de J.-J. Rousseau*, mais aussi beaucoup d'études de détail, nettes et suggestives. M. Ritter a fait là oeuvre d'initiateur. Il a ouvert la voie à des historiens comme Pierre-Maurice Masson, l'auteur de la *Religion de J.-J. Rousseau*: il a donné le ton à l'excellente revue que fait paraître la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau; il a rendu possible enfin la belle publication de la *Correspondance* de Jean-Jacques qui se poursuit actuellement.

M. Francis De Crue, correspondant de la section d'histoire, était né à Genève en 1854. Il s'est fait connaître par d'importants travaux sur le XVIIe siècle français, en particulier sur le comte de France Anne de Montmorency. Docteur de lettres de la Faculté des lettres de Paris, il enseigna l'histoire aux Facultés de Rennes, puis de Poitiers, avant d'être rappelé à l'Université de sa ville natale.

Par sa formation d'historien, par l'objet favori de ses travaux, par son enseignement dans deux de nos Facultés, M. De Crue se sentait étroitement attaché à la France. Il sut lui donner une preuve efficace de son affection lorsque, pendant la guerre, il eut, en sa qualité de recteur de l'Université de Genève, à présider l'oeuvre suisse des étudiants prisonniers de guerre.

Nous n'oublierons pas les services que M. De Crue a rendus pendant ces années cruelles.

—Journal de Genève.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Among the alluring reports recording the merry-making during the festive season at the fashionable hotels we have come across a short notice depicting a simple, old-world Christmas in one of the minor resorts; it sounds like a voice from the wilderness. It appeared in the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* (Dec. 22nd):—

### Christmas Eve in the Alps.

"Making an enforced sojourn among the mountains of Switzerland last year, I found Christmas Eve there a new and unaccustomed experience.

Outside it was Christmas of the greeting card variety—deep snow, hard dry frost, and sleighs drawn by spirited horses jingling over the white roads. Santa Claus in red cloak and with his bag of toys was the only feature needful to complete the illusion.

At the little "pension" where I stayed we were a mixed gathering, including Germans, Swiss, Austrians and British, and after "Abendessen" we assembled in the modest "salon" to await the arrival of our hosts. Decorated with evergreens, the room presented a festive appearance, and at one end stood an enormous Christmas tree decked out in tinsel and ornaments and numbers of wax candles, a sight to warm the heart of any child.

But we had not to wait long, for soon the proprietor and his wife appeared, attended by other members of the family and the staff. Greeting having been exchanged, the lights were put out, and our host proceeded with due formality to light the candles upon the tree. This done, the pianist struck a warning note, and with one accord the company raised their voices in unison to the tune of "Stille Nacht," the favourite carol of the German-speaking peoples.

German "Weihnachtslieder" are many and various, remarkable more for their simple, pious intent than for any inspiring fervour, but, having sung them since childhood, the natives know them word for word, and they sing them with that easy freedom that comes only from long familiarity with both tune and context. And this is the time for carols; the morrow, Christmas Day, they will keep quietly, "en famille."

With scarce a pause for breath the singers went on, verse after verse and carol after carol, all taken with that almost painful slowness and solemnity that is their habit upon this evening of the year.

It is a long ceremony, tedious perhaps to those whose knowledge of the language is slight, but as an earnest of the singers' simple piety not without interest.

But the "pièce de résistance" came with the tableau accompanying "Am Weihnachtsbaum die

Lichter brennen" (On the Christmas tree the candles are burning).

The first two verses picture the illuminated Christmas-tree, surrounded by bright-eyed children and old people gazing Heavenwards. Then, with the third verse, as the words tell, two angels appear—guests or members of the household clad in white robes with tinsel wings—and, kneeling before the tree, bless the company ere they unobtrusively leave while the gathering concludes with a final stanza.

Thereafter, in houses where there are children follows the distribution of the presents which in this part of Switzerland as in Germany are laid around the foot of the tree. But joining in our carols, alas! there were no children's voices and so further carols were sung until the last of the candles was burnt out.

The rite was finished then. After a spell of desultory conversation our hosts took their leave with a "Gute Nacht" and a "Frohliche Weihnachten," and, the staff bringing us measures of hot punch and biscuits, the evening was over and we were left alone. And so to bed.

Altogether, not an unpleasant way of spending the eve of Christmas."

The life of one of the country markets at this time of the year has taken the fancy of a writer in the *Liverpool Echo* (Dec. 22nd), who describes the entrancing scenes of the

### Christmas Market at Vevey.

"The great Alps are dressed in their ermine robes, and their spotless reflection is thrown back by the blue waters of the shimmering lake at their feet. The winter sun shines brightly on the glittering, frozen snow that carpets the Market-place of Vevey, one of the loveliest in Switzerland; and the much-bellopped plane trees along the side of the Lake Léman lift stark boughs to the clear sky as if in mute protest of the outrage done them last year, when their leafy branches were unmercifully trimmed in order to erect the huge amphitheatre seats for the Fête des Vignerons.

The ever-hungry gulls snatch greedily at the pieces of bread thrown them by a kindly market-woman, while the swans, disdaining the noisy clamour of their rivals, dispute with them the tit-bits fallen into the water. Passers-by, hurrying to choose their Christmas-tree, cast an amused glance at the well-known squabble, but do not stop. It is too cold for one thing, and, for another, trees in the "little forest" sell so quickly that no time must be lost in making one's choice.

For this market, the week before Christmas, is a very special affair. In the centre of the market-place there is a tall electric lamp, and every year at its base the peasants arrange circles of fresh fir trees, ranging in size from tiny things some twelve inches high to imposing saplings well over six feet. All the trees are cleverly fitted into a stand of wood with a tripod, and those buyers who are in the know always carefully examine the stand to make sure that there will not be any painful surprises as to the stability of their Christmas-tree when once it is placed in room or hall.

The "little forest" is speedily thinned, the best trees going first, and fresh loads of trees are continually being brought in by blue-smocked, bearded men in fur caps, whose long wooden carts have had their wheels replaced by runners, to which the frozen snow is still clinging. Not only Christmas-trees lie heaped in these horse-sleighs, but piles of Christmas greenery as well. Holly and Ivy, lovely drooping branches of pine with great pine-cones attached, cut branches of fir, and ivory-berried bunches of mistletoe are flung in heaps around the temporary forest. Special permission has to be applied for to bring the mistletoe into the towns, for it is a perfect plague in the apple orchards, and its juicy berries tempt the hungry birds, who let drop its seeds en route upon some unlucky apple tree, and the mischief is done unknown to its owner till too late.

Gay splashes of colour are afforded in this colour-scheme of blue and white and green by the heaps of oranges, tomatoes and aubergines, while a whole scale of varying greens is presented by the turnips and cabbages. The portly market-women, wrapped in their thickest shawls, keep their feet warm on the queer little wooden stools, with their open-work top and charcoal embers inside, and add a fillip to circulation by steaming cups of the inevitable café au lait.

The roast-chestnut men do a roaring trade in the Christmas market, and so does the cheapjack,

with his amusing patter and more or less useful wares; while there is always a brisk demand for the ready-made wreaths of greenery, sometimes horrible with paper flowers, or dyed blossoms among the ivy, sometimes really beautiful with fir cones and copper coloured berberry-leaves mingling with the velvet of the fir. Hundreds of these wreaths will find their way to the cemetery on Christmas Eve, and there is sure to be one at the foot of the Cross of Remembrance in the little military cemetery where British soldiers from home and overseas sleep their last quiet sleep under the shadow of the old church, dedicated to that soldier saint, St. Martin."

**Liechtenstein** forms the subject of the following long and evidently inspired recital in the *Dublin Evening Herald* (Dec. 27th). The historical notes are interesting, but we doubt whether all the people in and near that principality look upon "John the Good" as an ideal ruler who "spends large sums from his private fortune on making the lot of his subject a happy and contented one." It is not very long ago that an appeal was launched in Switzerland—and magnificently responded to both as regards money and active co-operation—in order to put his "household" in order.

"One of the strangest anomalies in a world of republics occurred a few weeks ago when Prince John II. celebrated the seventieth year of his reign over the little principality of Liechtenstein. John the Good he is known to his 11,000 subjects, as I with excellent reason, for not only has the Prince spent large sums from his private fortune in making their lot a happy and contented one, but they live in peace and prosperity, untroubled by the heavy hand of the tax-collector. Liechtenstein, with its sixty-five square miles, nestles at the foot of the Alps on the border of Austria. Its capital is Vaduz, consisting of little more than a primitive main street and about 1,200 population.

It is a proud little country. While empires and kingdoms toppled in 1918, and emperors and kings were hurried into exile, the Diet of Liechtenstein, its fifteen Deputies duly assembled, solemnly abrogated its economic dependence on Austria-Hungary, and reaffirmed its independence, with Prince John as its sovereign ruler. Like Andorra, the tiny State of Liechtenstein is a political curiosity. Originally the country was split into two parts—the county of Vaduz and the lordship of Schellenberg. In 1613 both were bought, and after passing through many hands came into the possession of the Count of Hohenems. For almost one hundred years the Count kept his estates, but in 1699, on account of adversity in political matters, he sold the lordship to the Liechtensteins, and in 1713 he disposed of the county of Vaduz to the same family.

The Liechtenstein family is a very old one, vying in that respect with the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs. First mention of them appears in the history of the twelfth century, but it was not until the seventeenth century that they were raised to princely rank. In 1719 the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire raised the new Liechtenstein possessions to a principality bearing the family name. As such, the country remained until 1806, when the Holy Roman Empire finally fell and the principality became part of the German Confederation and a sovereign state.

The next change came after the battle of Sadowa, 1866, when the Prussians conquered the Austrians and brought the Confederation to an end. Prince John was then 26 years old and in the eighth year of his reign. He took steps to make his sovereignty more real than it had been, although the country, being small and relatively poor, had to rely on Austria for its postal and telegraph facilities, its coinage, and ultimately was forced to join the Austrian Customs union. The country since its severance from Austria uses Swiss money and has joined the Swiss Customs union. Switzerland also administers the postal and telegraph systems.

The revenue of the country, which amounts to about 400,000 Swiss francs, is derived almost wholly from indirect taxation, the principal products being corn, wine, fruit, timber and cattle, for which the verdant Alpine pastures are well suited. Industrially the country is unimportant, although the textile manufactory is thriving. The people, although they used to speak a dialect called Romansch, now speak German, as do the Swiss across the border and their other neighbours, the Austrians.

Prince John, once fabulously rich, and still a minor Croesus, has nothing of the despot about him. From the outset his rule has been enlightened. He succeeded his father in 1858, and four years later he granted of his own free will a constitution to his "household," as he calls his subjects. This Constitution has been four times amended—the last time in 1921, and, as it now stands, grants universal suffrage and proportional representation to the people. Twelve members of the Diet are elected for four years, and three are appointed by the Prince. The Chief Executive is also appointed by the Prince, and is called the Administrator, his principal duties being to see that the will of the Legislature is carried out.

The length of his reign now approaches Louis XIV.'s seventy-two years, exceeds that of the Emperor Francis Joseph by two years, and that of Queen Victoria by six, and he is thus one of the longest-lived rulers in the history of the world. The time was when he kept a brilliant court in Vienna and when his private possessions rivalled those of the Hapsburgs, but the war changed all this, and his great collection of pictures, valued at £5,000,000, which he has given to the Austrian nation, is now part of the Liechtenstein Museum in Vienna.

Like most rulers, Prince John has been victimized by propaganda of deliberate inaccuracy. At one time he was reported to have rented his palaces in Vienna because he was hard up. It turned out, however, that he rented these buildings because he no longer needed them himself, and because he felt it a duty to make them available at a modest rental to the starving people of Vienna, who were at that time suffering the iniquities of inflation. On another occasion he was alleged to have charged admission to his museum to provide himself with a source of revenue, whereas the real reason was that he did so to provide a revenue for the upkeep of the collection, so that the charge would not fall on the Austrian people through taxation."

The writer of this article might have added that thanks to its present close economic relationship with Switzerland, the Principality is deriving considerable benefits. The income from the customs union with our country alone secures a net amount of about Frs. 250,000; the budgetted accounts for 1929 show a net surplus of nearly Frs. 190,000, or over 17 Frs. per head of population. This *en passant*, in case "John the Good" has not heard of it.

**The Lötschberg Railway.**

The *Railway Service Journal* (December) pays a tribute to this engineering feat, conceived and pursued by the late Guyer-Zeller at an age when most of us think of retiring:—

"The history of railway transport in Switzerland is full of romance. One of the most splendid achievements is the Lötschberg or Bernese Alps Railway, which increasingly is being selected by travellers as the route to Italy, for whom there is provision of the best facilities, with comfortable sleeping and dining cars in transit from Northern to Southern Europe. The Lötschberg Railway starts from Thun, which is connected with Berne by two electric lines, via Belp or Münsingen. On Berne converge the important lines, from Paris via Dijon, Pontarlier and Neuchâtel; from Paris via Delle, or Basle and Olten; from Calais and Boulogne via Laon and Delle; from Ostend and Brussels via Basle, and from Hamburg and Frankfurt via Basle and Olten; this great artery giving them easy access to Milan, Florence, Rome and Brindisi.

The older part of the Bernese Alps Railway runs, via Spiez, skirting the Lake of Thun, to Interlaken, and thence to Bönigen on the Lake of Brienz, the Company also owning steamboats on both these lakes.

Thus is entered one of the loveliest parts of that most wonderful country, the Bernese Oberland. Leaving the charming capital on the Aare, with its beautifully situated Houses of Parliament, the traveller, reaching Interlaken, with its glorious view of the queenly Jungfrau from the Höhweg or the Schynigge Platte, by means of the Bernese Oberland Railway from Interlaken-Ost, via Wilderswil and Zweilüttschienen, enters Grindelwald; that magnificent centre for climbing in the Wetterhorn, Schreckhorn and Fieschörner group, with the Finsteraarhorn, the Oberland's highest peak, in the background, and the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau; or Lauterbrunnen, whence the summer and winter re-ports of Mürren is attained by means of an electric funicular railway. The view of the Jungfrau range from Mürren is superb, and moderate climbers can tackle the Schilthorn, and the Seftner Furgge to Kandersteg, which can also be reached by a splendid route from Lauterbrunnen via Stechelberg, Obersteinberg, the Mutthornhütte and Petersgrat.

Wengen, on the opposite side of the Lauterbrunnen valley, is accessible through the electric Wengernalp Railway, which runs on to the Kleine Scheidegg, from which ascends the Jungfrau Railway, the highest existing station in Europe, the Jungfrau Joch (11,690 feet), being its terminus. This masterpiece of engineering construction and human imagination, opened in 1912, was the product of Adolf Guyer-Zeller at the age of sixty. After much blasting in the solid rocks the first station was opened in 1899, and now there is even a Berghaus at the summit of the railway, which takes passengers in absolute comfort up through huge rocks by a tunnel for about 4,910 feet. The intrepid mountaineer's healthy sport is not disturbed; rather he has a friendly feeling for the railway, sensing that his own holy fire is appreciated; and he welcomes the bold daring enterprise providing access to the great Aletsch Glacier, fifteen miles long, the fine crest of the Eiger, the valiant Monch, and the glistening beauty of the Jungfrau itself, that jealous and adorable mistress of them all. No one who has had the good fortune to enjoy clear

days at this exalted spot can fail to remember the awe-inspiring sights, and the veriest amateur in the noble art of mountaineering enters into the spirit of that gallant and heroic band, of Mallory and his English, Indian and Thibetan colleagues, whose attempts to master Everest so nearly succeeded.

The main Lötschberg Railway ascends the Kander Valley from poetic Spiez, on the Lake of Thun, dominated by the mighty Niesen, to Brigue, in sunny Valais, through the great Lötschberg tunnel, traversing a distance of 84km. (56.2m.) between Thun and Brigue. A technical masterpiece, its track represents many staggering feats of engineering prowess. It was the first Alpine Railway and practically the first important line to be operated entirely by electricity; specially large and powerful locomotives were built, and the newest engines, of 4,500 h.p., can haul trains of 560 tons weight up a gradient of 27 in 1,000 at a speed of 50km. (31.05m.) per hour. On November 18th, 1926, one of these locomotives, in a test journey, to the great astonishment of those who witnessed the feat, on wet rails climbed up a gradient of 27 in 1,000 with a load of 600 tons at a speed of 60 to 65km. (37½-40½m.) per hour. The use of at least three of the powerful steam engines would be necessary to accomplish this feat. In a fast passenger service a speed of 75km. (47m.) per hour can be reached. The line has 34 tunnels and the great Lötschberg tunnel, with over nine miles of track, curves considerably.

Leaving Adelboden and the Wildstrubel on the right, the line runs up to Kandersteg by means of a big viaduct, a large curve and a loop tunnel, with three lines visible one above the other at Felsenberg Castle above the brilliant, nestling Blausee. From Kandersteg (3,950 feet), the starting-point for the Gemmi and Lötschen passes, leaving the famous, dazzling Blümlisalp with the Oeschinensee on the left, the line runs through the Lötschen tunnel to Goppenstein, rising to a height of 4,080 feet. The tunnel, the third longest in Switzerland, was started in 1906 and finished in 1913. In the descent to the Rhône Valley at Brigue, a further 15½ miles of line bridging wild and deep ravines, there are twenty tunnels with seven viaducts and a mighty iron arch over the Bietsch brook above Aaron. This is one of the most thrilling railway journeys in Switzerland.

At Brigue, the terminus, the line connects up with the famous Simplon (Brigue-Iselle) line and tunnel to Italy, with the Federal Railway for Visp and Zermatt and the Matterhorn, and with the newly-constructed Furka-Oberalp Railway, running through the upper Rhône Valley to Gletsch beneath the renowned Rhône Glacier, giving connections with the Grimsel and Furka passes, and thence to Andermatt and the Grisons.

Not only the construction but also the protective work necessary renders such an enterprise a tremendous effort.

The most important private company in Switzerland, the Lötschberg Railway, got a subvention of six millions from the Federal Government on condition that a double line was made in the Lötschberg tunnel and adequate protection work undertaken during its execution. Many stocks and shares are in the hands of the Bernese Government, which guarantees interest on a loan of 42 millions, of 1912. The Confederation, failing the Cantons of Berne and Valais, has reserved the right of repurchase."

**Swiss Federal Railways.**

An article in *The Times* (Dec. 22nd) deals with the proposed expenditure on constructional

**QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES**

	BONDS.	Dec. 24		Dec. 29	
		Frs.	£	Frs.	£
Confederation 3% 1908	...	82.75	...	82.00	...
" 5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln.	...	102.25	...	101.75	...
Federal Railways 3½% A-K	...	87.25	...	89.00	...
" 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	...	102.00	...	102.65	...
	SHARES.	Nom.	Dec. 24	Dec. 29	
		Frs.	Frs.	Frs.	
Swiss Bank Corporation	...	500	857	862	
Crédit Suisse	...	500	985	999	
Union de Banques Suisses	...	500	770	763	
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	...	1000	3595	3555	
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	...	1000	5350	5300	
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	...	1000	4450	4400	
S.A. Brown Boveri	...	350	597	604	
C. F. Bally	...	1000	1517	1550	
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	...	200	941	942	
Entreprises Suizer S.A.	...	1000	1247	1280	
Comp. de Navig'n sur le Lac Léman	...	500	520	525	
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco	...	100	340	342	
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon	...	500	900	805	

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work, the electrification programme for the next twelve months having been considerably curtailed.

"In the Budget report of the Swiss Federal Railways for 1929 the expenditure on constructional work stands at 42,733,900f., as compared with 49,765,700f. in 1928. This decrease of over 7,000,000f. may be attributed to the fact that the first stage in the electrification programme of the railways is now being completed. Yet 4,737,000f. has been earmarked for electrification work, which will consist chiefly in the completion of certain installations.

The Federal Railways do not consider it expedient to start immediately on the second stage of electrification, which will involve some 420km. of line, and have therefore decided to allow several years to elapse before resuming work. The three-phase system at present in use in the Simplon Tunnel, is to be replaced during 1929 by the single-phase system, the sum of 750,000f. being set aside for this purpose. A second track is to be laid along various sections of the Federal railway system, entailing an expenditure of nearly 4,500,000f. The reconstruction of the stations at seven important centres, among them Geneva, Zurich and Basle, will entail an expenditure of 9,700,000f., while the acquisition of new rolling-stock and constructional work in respect of both line and superstructure will absorb additional sums. An innovation, which will involve an outlay of 700,000f., is the proposed equipment of goods vans with the "Drolshammer" automatic compressed air brake, an improvement which it is thought will not only effect a saving on the wage bill for brakemen, but will also contribute to the acceleration of goods traffic. The total expenditure on this item will amount to approximately 15,000,000f., spread over a number of years. By the end of 1929 the Swiss Railways will own no fewer than 999 locomotives, 552 steam and the remainder electric. Within the next twelve months the authorities intend to discard 50 steam locomotives, 50 passenger coaches and 520 goods trucks."

**The Swiss Presidency.**

The fact that the identity of the Swiss President is of little moment to anybody outside Switzerland has prompted a correspondent in the *Observer* (Dec. 23rd) to offer some explanation:—

"Switzerland has an executive system which is unique in the modern world. The executive power in Switzerland, instead of being, as it is in practice in every other constitutional State in the world to-day, concentrated in the hands of one man, is dispersed among seven holders of it. These seven members of the Swiss Executive are collectively known as the Federal Council. This Cabinet, as we should call it, is elected at the beginning of each Parliamentary term (three years) by the Federal Assembly; that is, the two Houses (Nat. Council and Council of States) sitting together. But though the Federal Council is elected by the Federal Assembly, it is not dismissible thereby within the three years mentioned. Hence the only circumstance which can prevent it holding office for three years is a previous dissolution of the Houses. But at the opening of the next Parliamentary term the members of the Federal Council may, and generally do, submit themselves for re-election, and in this way some of them have held office uninterruptedly for as long as fifteen years.

Now, because there are certain duties that it is clearly impossible for seven men to perform simultaneously, one of the seven is chosen by the National Assembly to act as Chairman of the Council for one year only. In this case Swiss democracy insists upon the principle of rotation, and no man is allowed to hold this office of Chairman for more than one year in succession. This is the officer often referred to as the President of Switzerland, but this he is not. He gets by way of salary only the equivalent of £60 a year more than the rest (who get £1,000), and, as the late Woodrow Wilson said, his precedence over the others is merely formal: he is in no sense the "Chief Executive."

Is it surprising, then, that M. Haab and his predecessors should be unknown quantities outside Switzerland? Yet it is this very absence of personalities which makes the Swiss Executive so interesting to students of comparative politics. The framers of the Swiss Constitution of 1874 would appear to have succeeded in a project which has baffled the ingenuity of all previous statesmanship, and especially that of France, namely, to combine the merits and exclude the defects of both the parliamentary and non-parliamentary executive systems, as we see them at work respectively in the United Kingdom and the United States. At all events, the Swiss indubitably succeed in concealing the identity of her officials beneath the cloak of a diffused executive power, which is the only true definition of extant Republicanism."

**A Dangerous Decision.**

Recent decisions of the Federal Tribunal on motoring matters have given rise to much adverse criticism, in fact it would seem that our supreme judges have little sympathy for the "road sense," to develop which in this country great efforts are

made. The latest ruling is taken severely to task by the *Motor* (Dec. 25th):—

"Strange indeed is the mentality of the powers that be in Switzerland! The Federal Tribunal has just given a ruling fraught with the utmost danger to automobilists on a case that has been before the courts for several years. Early in 1925 a motorist driving towards Neuchâtel at night with headlights, observed a man standing in the middle of the road and holding up his hands. The driver assumed that the man was going to ask for a lift, but, fearing that he might be an undesirable character, decided not to stop, though giving the man time to get out of the way. This, however, he failed to do and was injured. He claimed £800 damages, stating as his excuse for standing in the road that he was in charge of a horse and cart, and was afraid that the horse might be frightened by the headlights.

The Cantonal Tribunal of Neuchâtel dismissed his claim, but it was taken to the Federal Tribunal, and, by a majority of five to two, the judges awarded £200 damages. Although it was admitted that the horse showed no signs of fright, the decision was based on the contention that the animal might "possibly" have done so, and, further, that the carter might "possibly" have been unable, owing to sudden indisposition, to move out of the way quickly!

Consider the result. The right now being established in Switzerland for any unauthorised person to stop a car without visible cause, it is open to any highwayman or gang of highwaymen to hold up motorists at night for the purpose of robbery or assault. As a consequence, in fact, of this extraordinary decision, Swiss motorists anticipate an organised campaign of violence under the aegis of the Federal Tribunal."

**FACE A 1929.**

Amis lecteurs, je viens vous souhaiter une bonne et heureuse année! Je viens au moment où débute cette chronique en l'an de grâce 1929 vous dire toute la joie que j'éprouve à vous entretenir de tous à autre des faits de la Mère-Patrie qui, malgré l'éloignement vous est restée si chère! Je ne sais le climat qu'en cette semaine de fête vous aurez eu outre-Manche, je puis vous assurer qu'il fut détestable en Suisse, qu'il a plu dans tous les centres et que la neige a fondu dans toutes les stations de sports d'hiver. Aussi beaucoup ne sont pas entrés de gaité de coeur dans ce Janvier doux et moqueur!

Il règne parmi notre jeunesse un mal terrible, que ceux d'après les guerres de Napoléon connaissaient déjà et qu'ils ont doté d'un mot qui est resté et qui ne veut rien dire en somme: "le mal du siècle."

Qu'est ce que le Mal du Siècle? et quel est donc ce fléau qui avec une régularité surprenante reparait tous les 75 ans environ? Il fut jusqu'à présent le successeur lyubovite des grandes guerres, il était la Crise, et symbolisait les hésitations des jeunes devant un avenir confus et à reconstruire. Il est en ce début de 20ème Siècle autrement redoutable et angoissant.

Il ne s'agit plus cette fois-ci de tonnemens et de doutes passagers, il s'agit d'une crise totale; d'une révolution de la Pensée, des Principes et des Valeurs.

Ce qui hier encore était considéré comme intangible, n'est plus même aujourd'hui un sujet de discussion pour la génération nouvelle. Les Anciens peuvent arguer tant que bon leur semblera, et taxer leurs descendants de fous ou d'ironistes, il n'en pas moins certain que tous les dogmes du passé s'écroulent les uns après les autres et que les destructeurs ne savent par quoi les remplacer. Surtout ne croyez pas que ces jeunes démolisseurs agissent de gaité de coeur ou que je pense ici uniquement attendances politiques néfastes qui nous viennent de l'est. Ce dont je veux vous entretenir est beaucoup plus grave et plus profond. C'est de la Crise morale, intellectuelle et psychique dont il s'agit.

La guerre en déchaînant les passions humaines a fait exploser nos plus bas instincts. Les impénétrables du destin ont ensuite montré—qu'en apparence du moins—la justice et la bonté ne recevaient pas ici-bas leur récompense. Avec le reniement de la bonté, s'écroulait la divinité et les croyances admises et transmises de père en fils. Les penseurs ne se contentant plus d'accepter ce que d'autres avaient élaboré avant eux, sentirent la nécessité de buts nouveaux et solides. Mais les dieux Moloch étaient à terre, il ne restait que des ruines et des ruines si hautes...qu'elles en obscurcissaient l'horizon. Ils ont donc balbutier des pensées inédites sur des mots anciens et leur vocabulaire trop près de celui d'autan fut jugé plagiat

et rejeté. Ainsi depuis 10 ans l'humanité erre à la recherche du dieu nouveau et ne le trouvant point perd courage, s'afolle peu à peu et s'enlise lentement dans l'horreur de son impuissance et de son propre dégoût. Car, ayant vainement essayé l'escalade des cieux sa chute n'en fut que plus lamentable. En elle l'ange et mort et le Sur-homme qui devait la sauver d'elle-même a sombré dans une faillite scandaleuse. La voici désormais scindée en deux camps bien nets. D'un côté y a ceux qui ayant renoncé à la lutte s'abandonnent sans réserve à leurs instincts déchaînés. Pour eux il n'est plus de lois, ni morales ni matérielles. "Jouir!" est leur devise et la mort la certitude de l'anéantissement. Les seconds, mais qu'il ne sont pas la millièmième partie de l'ensemble espère contre toute espérance et passent alors par les doutes et les supplices les plus angoissants. Ce petit noyau d'hommes "de bonne volonté" arrivera-t-il à sauver le monde? Si tel n'est pas le cas nous courons alors à l'abîme car la violence récoltant le haine, la prochaine guerre ne connaîtra pas d'épargners!

Tel est le problème pressant qui se pose en ce début de 1929 et nul ne saurait y échapper. Car, caractéristique encore de notre époque, la plupart des hommes pour faire les responsabilités et ne pas regarder les choses en face, se grisent de futilités et remettent à plus tard ce qui seul importe.

Je tenais à vous signaler le danger en ces premiers jours de l'an ou la personnalité encore inquiète et troublée par le grand Inconnu qui se dresse devant elle, ne refuse pas une analyse des valeurs. Je tenais à le faire parce que le Salut du Monde dépend de tous, sans exception, et que personne n'est en droit de se dérober à ce devoir sacré. Amis lecteurs, procédez sans retard à votre examen de conscience et soyez pour vos Frères un flambeau de la Vérité qui vient... *Érik.*

**CORRESPONDENCE.**

*The Editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by Correspondents and cannot publish anonymous articles, unless accompanied by the writer's name and address, as evidence of good faith.*

Kenley, Surrey, den 31. Dez. 1928.

To the Editor of the *Swiss Observer*.

Die jüngst herausgekommene revidierte Verordnung über die Dienstpflicht der Auslandschweizer im Mobilmachungsfall trägt den Erfahrungen der letzten Mobilisation (Aug. 1914) keine Rechnung.

Die "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" vom 9. Nov. bringt die Hauptbestimmungen:—

"Bei einem Aufgebot der ganzen Armee haben von den ins Ausland beurlaubten Wehrpflichtigen einzurücken: Die in den Stäben und Einheiten des Auszuges und der Landwehr eingeteilten Offiziere, Unteroffiziere, Gefreiten und Soldaten, die in den folgenden Ländern wohnen: Europa: alle Staaten mit Einschluss der europäischen Inseln. Afrika: Aegypten, Tripolis, Tunis, Algerien und Marokko. Amerika: Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika und Kanada. Die von dieser Bestimmung nicht betroffenen Dienstpflichtigen haben bis auf be-ondere Weisung nicht einzurücken.

Bei einem teilweisen Aufgebot der Armee haben, sofern der Aufgebotsbeschluss nichts Gegenteiliges bestimmt, nur die in den Nachbarstaaten (ohne Kolonien und Protektorate): Deutsches Reich, Frankreich, Italien, Oesterreich und Liechtenstein wohnenden Offiziere und Unteroffiziere der aufgegebenen Stäbe und Einheiten des Auszuges und der Landwehr einzurücken.

Die Notunterstützung nach den Artikeln 22-26 der Militärorganisation wird auch an Angehörige einrückungspflichtiger Wehrmänner im Ausland ausgerichtet."

Für viele Auslandschweizer war die forcierte Rückkehr in die Schweiz im August 1914 eine Enttäuschung. Leute, die seit Jahren im Ausland anständig waren und sich dort eine Existenz geschafft hatten, sahen sich vor die Wahl gestellt, ihrer Bürgerpflicht nachzukommen, (was in vielen Fällen Verlust der Stellung meinte und die Familie der Wohltätigkeit zur Last stellte) oder auf der Liste der Deserteure zu erscheinen.

Wer ein eigenes Geschäft hatte, oder sonst eine sich nach viel Mühe erschaffte Stellung, mit Verantwortung für eine Familie, womöglich mit der Frau nicht-schweizerischer Abkunft, wird schliesslich eine schwere Wahl gehabt haben.

Sein Gewissen wird, falls er sich vom nennen wir es Erhaltungstrieb leiten liess, sich beruhigt haben über seine Verletzung der Bürgerpflicht, als er nach 3 Monaten schon nach Kriegsausbruch die rechtzeitig Eingerückten wieder beurlaubt zurückkommen sah, auch als er von ihnen hörte, wie wenig "estimiert" diese Auslandschweizer in ihren Verbänden wurden, wo sie durch jahrelange Abwesenheit natürlich keinen Kontakt, keine Bekanntheit mehr hatten und auch sonst dienstlich nicht mehr auf der Höhe waren.

Bis dann im 2. Kriegsjahre der Apparat der Aufspürung der nicht Eingerückten in Funktion trat, wo die Listen der Deserteure auf den Konsulaten und Gesandtschaften auflagen, wo nach Jahren nach Kriegsende die Militärgerichte in der Schweiz solche Fälle aburteilen mussten, weil es das Gesetz verlangte. (Eine Amnestie wäre am Platze gewesen.)

Wenn es auch nicht wahrscheinlich ist (wenigstens wollen wir es hoffen), dass die jetzige Gene-

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