

Home news

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HOME NEWS

The propaganda for and against the proposed capital levy is being carried on in a somewhat acrimonious and aggressive spirit, and every Swiss patriot will be pleased when this controversial question is finally settled, so that a more sober and dignified atmosphere may prevail again. A good many statements have been published which cannot be substantiated, and even threats have been made that if the voting on December 3rd should reject the capital levy, a general strike all over Switzerland would be the outcome. As stated in our last issue, a lightning strike has already taken place in the printing trade, and has chiefly affected Lausanne, Basle and Berne, in which towns the daily papers have suspended individual publication and are issuing a common news sheet. The points at issue are somewhat obscure, both parties, the workers and the master printers, reiterating their willingness to discuss the new tariff of wages and hours, the old one coming to an end on December 31st. Owing to the refusal of the printers in some newspaper offices to perform certain routine duties of the paper, events have been precipitated, and naturally the Socialist element is seeking to make capital out of the trend of circumstances, in furtherance of their own propaganda in favour of the capital levy.

The latest reports, however, show that the strike is gradually "petering out," the papers and printing offices concerned having overcome the initial difficulties, and a small number of workmen are offering to take up work again unconditionally.

Some other centres, like Winterthur and Solothurn, have also been affected, whilst Zurich, where there seems to be a fair amount of free labour, is suffering very little.

The Canton of Grisons, which up till now resolutely refused to permit motor traffic on its roads, is gradually coming into line. At the invitation of the Federal Council the Cantonal authorities are prepared to open the roads leading over the Julier and the Splügen to motor traffic.

The Grand Council of Basle last week ratified the naturalization of 82 foreigners.

The guides of Grindelwald and the surrounding districts unanimously agreed at the recent general meeting to build a shelter on the Mittellegi for climbers of the eastern slope of the Eiger. The hut will be built early next summer in the valley and will be transported by the guides from the glacier to the site for the building. To effect this about 250 metres of rope will be laid on the east side of the Eiger. It will be recollected that Mr. Maki, the Japanese climber, contributed 10,000 fr. towards the cost of erecting the shelter as a memento of his first excursion up this peak.

Signor Mussolini, on his return from the Lausanne Conference, sent a telegram to the Federal President, expressing his sincere appreciation of the reception accorded him during his stay on Helvetic soil. His telegram was, of course, acknowledged in a suitable manner by the Federal authorities. The head of the Fascisti and the popular hero of Italy was, if we remember aright, on rather less ceremonious terms with the Confederation authorities after his previous stay in Switzerland.

Throughout the north of Switzerland snow has already fallen abundantly, and the meteorological station at Zurich registered on November 27th a fall of 8 inches, a record for the time of year. This is a little early even for the devotees of winter sports, who scan the meteorological reports from Switzerland so eagerly at this season of the year.

It will be learnt with pleasure that Mr. P. Carmine, the distinguished member of the Swiss Colony in London, is now considered out of danger, and his complete recovery may be looked forward to with confidence. The series of successful operations, which have given Mr. Carmine a new lease of life, have been performed at the Sanatorium Victoria, Bern, by the eminent surgeon, Professor F. de Quervain, the successor of Professor Kocher, and it is thanks to the great surgical science of Professor de Quervain that Mr. Carmine has been restored to health.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The Winter Season.

If advertising offers any indication at all, the great publicity given in the English press should ensure a Swiss winter season quite on a par with the pre-war scale. In fact, everything seems favourable, and with the all-round drop in hotel charges, a small reduction in railway fares, and a more attractive exchange, the English visitor will economise something like 20 per cent. of his expenses as compared with last year. It is reported that hundreds of visitors have already booked accommodation in the better-known resorts. Of the English dailies the *Morning Post* (Nov. 14, 15, 18 and 21) has published a series of articles dealing with winter sports and containing most valuable advice to those tourists who, from a sporting point of view, wish to make the best of their holiday. Referring to the question of expense, the writer says:—

"There exist many who may desire either 'to try a new place' or to effect a more economical holiday. There has during the past twelve seasons arisen a considerable competition between Alpine resorts in providing sports and amusements. This state of affairs has unquestionably resulted in some rise of prices. Thus any particular resort situated on a steep slope must find it expensive to construct and maintain, for instance, a large ice rink or a toboggan run. It is perhaps on indoor amusements that money is freely being spent. The maintenance of a large ball-room, combined with an orchestra, available three times a day and ready to perform until 3 or 4 a.m., together with an adequate staff of waiters and attendants to the wants of the guests, is bound to add to expense. Then what of the refreshments that are consumed during a night's dancing in a bone-dry atmosphere 5,000 feet above sea level?"

If a reduced expenditure is desired, some sacrifice must be made. In the old days this sort of night amusement was largely limited to impromptu dancing: one piano sufficed; the entertainment ceased at 11 p.m. The next day's sport on the snow was considered long before the evening's cotillon. To the true sportsman this was a better period: it was certainly cheaper. Some hotels fortunately still cater for visitors of simpler tastes: they can charge less.

There will be found at, or near, the very best Swiss winter resorts a number of hotels where comfortable "pension" prices of less than ten shillings per day could be obtained. Many of these establishments are very simple, yet eminently suited for families and young people. But besides thinking of the usual centres, ambitious holiday makers with young families might well consider stopping short of the Alps and patronising the Swiss Jura, where the accommodation is good. Sport should be adequate and snow sufficient. The saving on the cost of tickets alone is appreciable.

A similar though shorter article in *Truth* (Nov. 15th) is intended mainly for novices. It entirely disregards the social factor, for "if you are going to the Alps to dance, and to cultivate the aristocracy, you should spend a quiet hour at the British Museum studying the back numbers of the 'Tatler and the Sketch.' If you are in doubt as to your personal outfit, you should turn to the *Daily Mail* (Nov. 15th), where the merits of 'Men's Wear' are considered in all their aspects, whilst the *Daily Graphic* (Nov. 23rd) retails some of the costumes recently shown at Reville's, where "tweed-clad women and several sporting parsons" were watching a knickerbocker mannequin parade which would have "charmed a polar bear" if he had lived in Switzerland instead of sulking "at the North Pole." In the interest of domestic harmony and economy we refrain from giving a full description of some of these fascinating costumes, although "pour être belle, il faut souffrir." *The Sphere*, *The Queen*, *The Gentlewoman*, *The Graphic* and *Ladies' Field* all publish engaging articles superbly illustrated, depicting the latest fashion designs, along with typical Swiss winter scenes.

Lausanne.

The fact of the Near East Conference being held in Lausanne—or near Lausanne, to be quite correct—is responsible for the appearance in the English press of highly interesting references to its literary and political associations. The *Westminster Gazette* (Nov. 20th) calls Lausanne a "beautiful city of earnest lotus-eaters" and thinks it a most difficult place for the Conference to work in (it has no golf-course!), but the *Morning Post* (Nov. 16th) considers it an ideal place for this purpose. It traces the memories of Byron, Gibbon, Voltaire and Rousseau, and generally describes Lausanne as a quiet, restful place, "living" "as much in the past as in the present":—

"It boasts, the wise have calculated, some 2,000 annual hours of sunshine, which is quite as much as you want—one likes to see a little rain sometimes. If you are ill, it has the best doctors in Europe: they have out your appendix in six minutes—some say four—and no doubt they can kill you in even less. If you are not ill, but what is called so-so, you can

climb up to En Marin and play golf for the benefit of your health. I may be prejudiced, but I do not suppose anyone in his senses ever played golf for any other reason. And if you are merely well, Lausanne offers you the prospect of a reasonable, civilised existence—a thing somewhat uncommon these days and in foreign parts. It is still, as in the time of Gibbon, the home of an amiable and polished society—perhaps they will make you a member (as they have me) of the 'Cercle Littéraire,' that century-old club of which our own Kemble was one of the founders. Above all, there is comfort in its hotels—comfort, and a certain 'aurea mediocritas,' or moderation in the matter of charges, which brings a rare peace to the heart of the traveller. . . ."

The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (Nov. 20th) is of the same opinion, for the "mental atmosphere" of Lausanne is tranquil, but not sleepy; it has a "history and at the same time is very modern." A few further extracts may prove of interest:—

"Those who know not Lausanne may have an impression that the place consists entirely of girls' schools, and that the maidens of England are a large element in its population. They constitute, truly, one of the place's charms, but not the only one."

Probably the most distinguished native was Benjamin Constant, but the place had sojourners even more distinguished. Voltaire was there for two or three years before he settled down at Ferney, near Geneva. It is recorded that the Bernese Governor of Lausanne addressed him thus on his arrival:—'Monsieur de Voltaire, I hear that you have insulted God; that is bad, but He will forgive you. I also hear that you have insulted Christ; that also is bad, but He will forgive you. But do not insult Leurs Excellences Les Messieurs de Berne, for they will never forgive you. . . ."

The *Birmingham Daily Mail* (Nov. 21st) deals chiefly with the literary associations; the writer gives short pen-pictures of Voltaire and Rousseau, somewhat realistic and slightly repugnant to admirers, but we publish what he says about Gibbon:

"Lausanne and Gibbon are names destined for ever to be united. There the fat and pompous historian of the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' lived for 15 years, while he completed his stupendous task. Stupendous, indeed! It is one of those books, as Mr. Birrell remarked, about which one is permitted to say with Mr. Silas Wegg: 'I haven't been, not to say right slap through him very lately, having been otherwise employed, Mr. Boffin.' As a youth Gibbon, expelled from Oxford for having declared himself a Roman Catholic, was sent by his angry father to live with a Calvinist pastor at Lausanne, where he learned Greek, met Voltaire, and fell in love with the charming young French mademoiselle, who afterwards married the famous Necker and became the mother of the famous Madame de Staël. Bidden by his father to renounce her, he acquiesced, and uttered the immortal phrase: 'I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son.' Later, preparing materials for his great book, he stayed a year in Lausanne. Still later, after politics and Parliament, free to realise his ambition, he settled down there to compose his stately periods. . . ."

Swiss Capital Levy.

With the parliamentary elections over, this much-discussed proposal has now been given a rest in the English press, only casual short reports appearing to the effect that the plebiscite on Dec. 3rd will reject the Capital Levy. This, of course, reflects general opinion in Switzerland, but in face of recent developments this confident optimism seems to be dangerous. The printers' strike now on clearly testifies that the foreign influence among Swiss Socialists is stronger than some people would like to believe. On the whole the English press has treated this vital question in a haphazard fashion; the forthcoming voting is termed a referendum, which is, of course, a totally different thing from the initiative, and no paper has taken the trouble to point out to its readers the essential difference. It strikes us as peculiar when *The Times* (Nov. 24th) publishes a letter from a baronet who invokes the powerful advocacy of that paper for the introduction of the Swiss referendum in the English system of Government, and thus prevent the utter subservience of a House of Commons to the autocratic will of a Prime Minister. "We 'have,' he further erroneously states, 'an object lesson at present in Switzerland, where the capital 'levy, but for the referendum, would be imposed 'on the people.'"

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The development in the money market in the last few weeks has been strikingly different from that usually expected at this time of year. In ordinary times the period from Michaelmas up to the middle of December is characterised by very easy conditions; but to-day the available resources of the market have become so reduced that discounts can no longer be effected so cheaply as during recent months, and there is an average increase of about one per cent. all round in the rates