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HOME NEWS

The Federal Council, to whom the town councils of Zurich and Schaffhausen applied for sanction to make additional payments to the unemployed, refused the request on account of the absence, in both towns, of exceptionally unfavourable circumstances.

* * *

The Federal Council is proposing to erect in Thun nine new powder magazines at a cost of 286,000 frs.

* * *

A special committee of the National Council, meeting in Zurich, decided by 20 votes to 6 votes to endorse the message of the Federal Council to recommend rejection of the proposed Customs Initiative, although the president of this committee, National Councilor Mosmann (La Chaux-de-Fonds), who was absent through illness, expressed himself in favour of the measure.

* * *

It is reported that the management of the Swiss Federal Railways has succeeded in disposing of 188 locomotives which in consequence of the electrification have become superfluous. They have been sold abroad at 18,000 frs. each, realising nearly 3½ million francs.

* * *

The town of Olten has engaged a fully qualified lady dentist, exclusively for the benefit of the school children; no charge is made to the children of parents of limited means.

* * *

A conference of cantonal finance directors, bankers and economic experts, under the presidency of Federal Councillor Musy, has been convened for the 10th inst. at Fribourg, for the purpose of studying fiscal reform, future taxation, the exchange position and the method of obtaining the necessary funds for Old Age insurance.

* * *

An initiative, demanded in the canton of Obwalden, seeks to secure election of higher officials by a direct vote of the people.

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To enquire into the causes of the late war is the object of a neutral commission, on which Holland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland are represented, and which opened its deliberations at Zurich on January 4th.

* * *

A new association has been formed in Geneva in order to fight the convention as to the Savoy free zones, signed on August 7th, 1921, between Switzerland and France. Not only in Geneva, but in other parts of Switzerland, there is evidence of a strong movement against the ratification of this convention.

* * *

Owing to a heavy snowfall over the whole of the canton Ticino, considerable damage has been caused; the telephonic communication with the interior of Switzerland and the traffic on the Gotthard line being seriously interfered with.

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A new weekly paper, entitled *Sqilla Italica*, is being issued in Lugano for the purpose of propagating fascism amongst the Italians in Switzerland.

* * *

A Vaudois benefactor, Mr. Alexis Forel, has bequeathed to the Association du Vieux-Morges a sum of 200,000 frs., in addition to his residence containing valuable collections.

* * *

The workmen of the "Union" watch manufactory in Solothurn have presented Mr. Mussolini, the Italian Prime Minister, with a magnificent watch, suitably engraved with the emblems of fascism.

* * *

Official Swiss postcards will in future be adorned in the corner opposite to the stamp with views of places of interest.

* * *

A somewhat alarming prevalence of goitre has been brought to light in the canton of St. Gall.

An examination of the children in the elementary schools established the fact that 61.9 per cent. were suffering from an enlargement of the thyroid gland. The old notion that water was the cause of the trouble has been superseded by the belief that, apart from the hereditary factor, diet plays an important rôle.

* * *

A young watchmaker, Jakob Ott, of Bischofszell (Thurgau), is under suspicion of having set fire to the Goetheanum in Dornach (Basle). Himself a member of the sect (which he is said to have joined for business reasons) and being in financial difficulties, he applied, without success, to his co-religionists for assistance. He disappeared the day after the conflagration, in the fighting of which he took a prominent part.

* * *

Ignoring unfavourable weather conditions, two brothers, Prof. Charles de Rahm, of Yverdon, and Mr. David de Rahm, engineer, of Affoltern, set out on Friday, Dec. 29th, from Lenk for a ski-ing expedition on the Wildhorn, and have not been heard of since. Search parties failed to find any trace of the missing men, and it is surmised that the two alpinists were caught by an avalanche on the Ifigenfall.

* * *

Overpowered by the strength of the current, two young men, coming down the Rhine from Birsfelden, lost control of their small boat, which was dashed against the central pillar of the railway bridge at Basle. Before any assistance could be rendered, the two occupants disappeared in the waves; their bodies have not yet been recovered, but it is stated that the names of the victims are S. Beil and Emil Bürgin.

* * *

Mr. Louis E. Sinn, Swiss Consul General in Valparaiso (Chile), died on December 30th last.

EXTRACTS FROM PAPERS.

Une Histoire peu banale.

De la part des galopins, disait Toeppfer, on peut s'attendre à tout. Et de la part de l'administration fédérale donc!

Ces jours derniers, les principaux restaurateurs de la ville de Berne ne furent pas peu étonnés de recevoir de l'administration de l'impôt fédéral de guerre un colis de bouteilles de champagne. Jusqu'ici le fisc n'avait pas l'habitude de s'adresser aux gens pour leur faire des cadeaux. C'est donc avec une grande surprise que les Bernois examinaient l'envoi qui leur était fait par l'impôt fédéral de guerre.

Les bouteilles de champagne qui leur étaient envoyées portaient l'inscription suivante:

"Chauvet brut 1904 extra dry."

Ce qui augmenta encore leur étonnement, car il n'existe pas de marque de champagne Chauvet! Cependant, ils recevaient presque en même temps du chef de l'impôt fédéral de guerre, M. Blau, dont le nom a été mêlé à une retentissante affaire, l'aimable invitation de déguster le champagne. Ils le firent non pas volontiers, mais à leur corps défendant, car la boisson contenue dans les bouteilles si bien étiquetées et capsulées d'or n'avait rien de commun avec le vin doré et pétillant qui nous vient des coteaux de la Marne. C'était, pour employer l'expression de l'un des restaurateurs bernois, de la vulgaire bibine. Les intéressés, croyant qu'on leur avait fait une mauvaise farce, se dédommagerent en vidant une bouteille de Mumm, à moins que ce ne soit une bouteille de Röderer ou de Moët.

Quelques jours après, ils furent invités à venir conférer avec M. Blau, le directeur de cet impôt fédéral de guerre extraordinaire. Celui-ci leur fit savoir qu'il avait accepté en paiement d'une maison qu'il n'a d'ailleurs pas voulu nommer, 4000 bouteilles de ce champagne "Chauvet brut 1904 extra dry" au prix ridicule de 4 francs par bouteille, et il leur demanda de lui faire une offre pour cette marchandise, se déclarant prêt à la leur céder à un prix avantageux. Quand il apprit que ces messieurs n'en voulaient à aucun prix, pas même pour dix sous la bouteille, il se fâcha tout net: "Comment, leur dit-il, pouvez-vous discuter la valeur d'un vin que nous avons fait analyser par le chimiste fédéral et que celui-ci a reconnu comme répondant parfaitement aux exigences de notre réglementation sanitaire?" Les Bernois, fort amusés par cette répartie, firent valoir au fonctionnaire qu'il y avait une grande différence entre un chimiste fédéral et un dégustateur et ils lui donnèrent le conseil d'ouvrir lui-même un débit pour vendre au verre ses 4000 bouteilles de pseudo-champagne. Le directeur de l'impôt fédéral de guerre à, paraît-il, aussi peu

goûté cette plaisanterie, que les restaurateurs son champagne.

Telle est l'histoire qui nous est contée par un de nos amis de la capitale et dont nous garantissons l'authenticité. Elle ne laisse pas de suggérer quelques réflexions. On avouera tout d'abord qu'il est pour le moins singulier que l'impôt fédéral de guerre accepte des marchandises en paiement. C'est une façon d'agir qui rappelle singulièrement une des clauses de l'initiative sur le prélèvement, à laquelle le peuple suisse a fait un si magistral enterrement. L'initiative prévoyait en effet que le fisc pourrait se payer en actions, en participations, en terres, etc. L'impôt fédéral de guerre, lui, ouvre un petit commerce et se fait payer en marchandises. Les contribuables admettront difficilement que de telles expériences soient faites sur leur dos. La façon dont M. Blau vient de se faire "empiler" prouve que ce fonctionnaire peut être très habile pour inventer ou faire rentrer les impôts, mais qu'il n'entend rien au négoce. A chacun son métier et les vaches seront bien gardées.

Il serait curieux de savoir si le département fédéral a eu connaissance de cette étrange affaire et, dans ce cas, quelles mesures il a jugé à propos de prendre. Les 4000 bouteilles que l'impôt fédéral de guerre a acceptées pour une valeur de 16,000 francs en représentent à peu près 800, c'est-à-dire le prix des bouteilles vides. Si le département est d'accord pour que chaque commerçant s'acquitte de son impôt de guerre en vieux rossignols, il doit le faire connaître le plus tôt possible; les amateurs ne manqueront pas et le fisc aura bientôt des magasins bien remplis, sinon bien achalandés.

On sait, d'autre part, avec quelle rigueur les services de contrôle poursuivent les négociants qui mettent en vente des marchandises ne répondant pas aux prescriptions de la réglementation fédérale. Que va-t-on faire à la direction de l'impôt de guerre qui essaie de vendre du champagne qui n'en est pas? A-t-elle, comme c'est son devoir, porté plainte contre lui? Mais peut-être contribuable qui lui a transmis cette marchandise avariée? Si elle ne l'a pas fait, elle doit réparer sans retard le temps perdu et demander la confiscation de son stock.

Il serait pourtant grand temps que nos administrations comprennent à Berne que le peuple suisse ne veut rien savoir de l'étatisme et qu'il préfère confier son ravitaillage au commerce régulier plutôt qu'à la direction du cadastre ou de l'impôt fédéral de guerre, même si celui qui est à sa tête est un fonctionnaire aussi distingué que M. Blau. Il y a quatre ans que la guerre est terminée et il est des fantaisies que seule elle pouvait excuser! ("Suisse Libérale," Neuchâtel.)

* * *

Un Incident au théâtre.

Le soir de saint Sylvestre un incident s'est produit au théâtre de Zurich. On jouait une farce allemande intitulée "Robert und Bertram." Au premier acte, un acteur allemand, qui ajoutait sans doute des floritures de son cru au texte de la pièce, s'est permis de faire une allusion à la Société des nations en la comparant à une bande de voleurs. Plus tard il s'est mis à chanter des couplets au sujet de la faillite des quatorze points de Wilson. C'était un article de journal de pangermaniste mis en chanson.

Outré d'une pareille insolence, un professeur de l'Université de Zurich s'est levé, a sifflé le cabotin allemand et a quitté la salle. Quelques auditeurs ont appuyé son énergique protestation, d'autres — des étrangers sans doute — ont eu le front d'applaudir le malotru qui aurait mérité une paire de gilets véritablement helvétiques. Ce serait à la direction de nos théâtres de rappeler aux acteurs étrangers qu'ils ont à respecter notre pays et une institution qui y a son siège. ("Journal de Genève.")

* * *

Sur la tombe de Pictet de Rochemont.

Beaucoup de Genevois ignorent que Charles Pictet de Rochemont, qui est mort le 29 décembre 1824, a été enseveli le 1er janvier 1825 au cimetière de Plainpalais, où un monument élevé par la reconnaissance de ses concitoyens et de ses confédérés recouvre encore ses restes.

Ce monument, d'une grande élégance de lignes, orné d'inscriptions qui rappellent l'œuvre du grand homme d'Etat, embelli aujourd'hui de lierre, de mousse et de la patine du temps, n'est jamais contemplé sans émotion par les trop rares visiteurs.

Le comité genevois pour le maintien des zones de 1815 et de 1816 a décidé de saisir l'occasion de l'anniversaire de la Restauration de notre canton à rendre un hommage de reconnaissance et de fidélité à Pictet de Rochemont, en déposant une couronne sur son tombeau. La courte et simple

manifestation aura lieu au cimetière de Plainpalais, dimanche, à 10 heures précises, entre le moment de la promenade traditionnelle des nos musiques militaires et celui du Service de la Restauration. Elle sera présidée par M. Alexandre Livron, maire de Pery-Certoux. Des choeurs des Gyms chanteurs de Genève-Ville encadreront les deux brefs discours qui seront prononcés, l'un par M. Lucien Cramer, l'éditeur de la "Correspondance diplomatique de Pictet de Rochemont," l'autre par M. Charles Henneberg, président du comité genevois qui a organisé la réunion à laquelle tous sont cordialement invités. ("La Tribune de Genève.")

* * *

La fusion à Montreux.

Les électeurs du Châtelard et des Planches avaient à se prononcer dimanche sur la question de la fusion des deux communes, opération qui aurait fait de Montreux la seconde ville du canton et qui présentait en outre l'avantage de simplifier bien des rouages administratifs. Les électeurs du Châtelard ont accepté à une très grosse majorité la fusion (environ 1100 voix contre 108), tandis que ceux des Planches l'ont rejetée (environ 470 non contre 350 oui). Tout reste ainsi en l'état.

Une vigoureuse propagande avait été menée des deux côtés.

(Feuille d'Avis de Ste. Croix.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.**The Winter Season.**

Even the most casual reader of English papers will find it quite impossible to get away from Swiss scenery and articles on winter sports. Quite apart from the subjects, the nature of the pictures, always depicting beauty and joy, is such as to make a strong appeal to the human craving for happiness, but nothing seems to us more charming and delightful than the photographs published in *The Graphic* (Dec. 30th), showing English children enjoying themselves on the ice and snow at Davos. What a contrast to the distasteful poster now showing on the hoardings, depicting a one-legged man hobbling on a stick and personifying a well-known actor in a new play!

Ski-ing remains the chief topic and is continually championed by Ward Muir (*vide* long article in *Sunday Times* of Dec. 24th), who says that other sports are showing symptoms of becoming, by contrast, mere pastimes for odd moments when ski-ing, for some reason, is "off." Another contributor in the *Evening Standard* (Dec. 29th) dwells on the miracles which a short stay in the Alps produces on the mental disposition, and wonders—

"why some genius amongst statesmen does not arrange that those international conferences at Lausanne and Paris be transferred to a place like St. Moritz, with an altitude of over 6,000 feet? Make the delegates skate, ski, toboggan or even curl in the morning, and let the deliberative assemblies always be held after luncheon. The conferences could not help reaching a speedy agreement. It is sluggish liver which hampers accord...."

Distance and expense often deter people from risking a winter holiday, but—

"Nothing is more entertaining than to watch some folk who have been persuaded to come out here rather against their will. They know they 'won't like it.' They think it silly for a grown person to straddle a little toboggan and go careering down a slope. But in two days you meet them breathlessly tugging the little thing to the top, and if you ask how they like it, they gasp, 'Fine!' In a week they want to go bobbing."

Of course, nothing on earth would compel them to fix those great awkward ski on to their feet! And then you come across them having a 'try,' and floundering ridiculously in the snow, and you laugh at their contortions trying to get up, and wish a cinema man was there, and they laugh back jollily in return.

The new arrival saunters to the curling rink. He is quite contemptuous that eight apparently sane men should get so excited hurling lumps of granite to and fro. What a lot of fuss in getting a stone within a particular circle! When the game is over he essay's putting down a stone for himself. The next day, if invited as a novice to join, he 'doesn't mind.' But within a week you can't keep the fellow off the rink. He fancies himself as a curler, and feels sore if he does not get into a team."

* * *

Some time ago (Dec. 17th) the *Observer* published some disparaging remarks on the society the English visitor now meets at the winter resorts; a rejoinder from an English resident, regretting and refuting these comments, has now been promptly published by our contemporary.

* * *

The Escalade.

A writer in the *Morning Post* (Dec. 23rd) is agreeably surprised at the modern fashion in which the anniversary of this historic event is celebrated in the austere city of Calvin. We cull the following:—

"Here in Geneva those of us visitors to the city of Calvin who do not know her in all her aspects have been rubbing our eyes. For on Saturday last groups of masquerading inhabitants began to appear, and by the Sabbath evening pierrrots and pierrlettes, apaches and country peasants were flocking into the streets.

Far into the night bands of revellers, linked arm in arm, shouted and sang. Fond parents were leading gay offspring with serious little faces peering over large pierrrot ruffles. It was truly a people's holiday. For this was the Feast of the Escalade!

The bridges over the Rhone with their strings of lights shining on the gay dresses resembled a Venetian scene on a midsummer night, and only an austere and icy 'bise' unrelenting like the very breath of Calvinism, reminded the visitor that he stood in another season and in another clime. And as he looked from under the tall, bleak houses, so beneath the great standard amped the tiny groups of revellers came to resemble a picture done by James Pringle.

For five days and nights the revelling continued. In a tramcar we encountered a small pierrrot, capped with a pyramidal white wig and a star-spangled dress, over which there rejoiced two eyes brighter than the spangles—all his heart in the fun of the fair. He had in train a comely American dame and his nurse. 'Yes,' the former was saying to a compatriot in the car, 'he is enjoying himself fine. He is a real handsome boy. Look at his legs! And the pink in his cheeks is real.' She was evidently testing the lighter side of the spirit of the Escalade with zest from the very beginning. She meant to continue to the last revel, for, like all good Americans, she loved to think that she was seeing the real life of the people of other countries. So she was treating her little Genevieve friend right through these festivals.

A Nonconformist member of our party was looking as severe as one of the City Fathers of Calvin's time at the innocent merrymaking on the Sabbath day, and at the noise and musical nights. She had thought of that city as a true Mecca for those of a hard faith, and, behold! it seemed to her that the Genevese citizens were behaving like those she had been brought to believe were the goats. Perhaps, if she had attended the solemn service of thanksgiving in the ancient Cathedral of Geneva she might have relaxed her judgment. There seemed no end to this week of surprises.

Yet Miriam danced before the Ark: remember—oh, austere ones!"

* * *

Quack Doctors.

A very interesting article in the *Lancet* (Dec. 23rd) deals with the overcrowding of the medical profession in Switzerland, and is based on statistics recently published. The exceptional facilities and opportunities for studying medicine, the unfavourable economic conditions of the country, and the limited possibility of emigration have seriously affected the medical profession. The ratio of doctors to inhabitants is said to be excessive, especially in the university towns. Lausanne, for instance, "La Mecque Médicale," boasts of one doctor for every 578 inhabitants, whilst St. Gall possesses one for every 1,136 possible patients; in industrial centres, and especially rural districts, the proportion is much better. The quack is still to be found in some dark corners, in spite of the reputation for enlightenment which Switzerland enjoys. All the cantons, with the exception of one, grant licences to practise only to holders of a Federal diploma. The one exception is Appenzell (A.Rh.), a perfect Eldorado for quacks, having 26 qualified doctors and 35 unqualified practitioners.

"The latter do not confine their activities to their own canton, but carry on an extensive postal and consulting practice throughout the country. Every oriental and occidental medical system is represented amongst them. Arabian medicine-men, magnetotherapists, electrotherapists, spagrics, herbalists, 'eye-diagnosticians,' psycho-phytotherapists, and phonologists advertise their trades. One of them describes himself as court physician to the Sultan of Perak, another as professor of the University of Lima. Some diagnose all ailments exclusively by the examination of the urine. It has been learnt from a trustworthy source that one of them used to test a hundred samples of urine in half an hour, and to write as many prescriptions in the same time. Others never see their patients; they only require a sample of urine, after which they send the diagnosis and medicament by return of post, and charge a heavy fee. In their original occupations some of these unqualified practitioners were farmers, innkeepers, clerks, clergymen, cobblers, architects, hairdressers, coachmen, policemen, journalists, tramcar conductors, butchers, musicians, and midwives."

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The end of the year was characterised in the Swiss money market even more by a falling off in the rates obtainable for long-term money than by a similar tendency for short-term credit. Nor does there appear any immediate prospect of an alteration of this tendency early in the new year. Any such movement would first show in a growing call on the National Bank for credit and a stiffening of the rates for private discount. At present the rates quoted for first-class bank acceptances, etc., of 2 or 3 months are between 2 1/8 and 2 3/4%, finance bills are quoted 2 1/2 to 3%, and advances on security were procurable at 4 1/2 to 6%. Call money was obtainable at 1% up to near the end of the year. The National Bank's return for the 30th of December shows an increase of 37 1/2 millions in the note circulation, as compared with the preceding week. The total note issue at the end of the year thus amounted to 976,426,000 frs., as compared with somewhat over 1,000 millions at the end of 1921.

The 6,000,000 frs. loan recently issued by the Central Swiss Power Works in Lucerne was a complete success and was over-subscribed. Interest at the rate of 5% is payable on the 30th of June and the 31st of December, and the whole issue is redeemable in 1935, the company having the option to repay in 1930 on three months' notice. The funds thus obtained are to be devoted to consolidating the company's floating debt and to carry on the works on the Lungernsee.

The shareholders of the Volkstuch A.G. in Lucerne have approved the final report of the liquidating commission. For the year 1921-22 a dividend of 5% was paid, and the whole share capital will be repaid in full.

With regard to the project for establishing bonded warehouses in Zurich, to which reference has already been made in these notes, it is now announced that certain existing warehouses in Zurich will from the beginning of January be afforded this privilege. Here goods may be unpacked, sorted, sampled, etc., and under special authority they may also in certain cases be subjected to further stages of manufacture. The establishment of this bonded warehouse with so little delay is regarded as a highly satisfactory move. Unfortunately, however, the accommodation at present available is very limited, and most firms will have to wait until the scheme for the erection of a large bonded warehouse can materialise. The Zurich Chamber of Commerce is very active in this matter, and it is hoped that definite plans may shortly be forthcoming.

The Swiss hotels had a bad season, in spite of some improvement on that of 1921. The fact that the number of beds occupied only came up to one-half of that of pre-war days is sufficient proof that the crisis is not yet over. In a few cases it was found possible to make some slight profit after paying expenses. The better-class hotels have fared better in this matter than the others. Fifty per cent. of the guests came from Great Britain, America, Holland and Scandinavia, about forty per cent. were Swiss, and only 10 per cent. came from the countries whose exchange was at a considerable discount.

STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

	BONDS.	Jan. 2	Jan. 8
Swiss Confederation 3% 1903	... 82.00%	80.50%	
Swiss Confed. 9th Mob. Loan 5%	101.25%	101.25%	
Federal Railways A-K 3 1/2%	85.80%	84.70%	
Canton Basle-Stadt 5 1/2% 1921	104.75%	104.75%	
Canton Fribourg 3% 1892...	77.00%	77.00%	
Zurich (Stadt) 4% 1909 ...	100.00%	100.00%	
	SHARES.	Nom. Jan. 2	Jan. 8
Swiss Bank Corporation ...	500 661	659	
Credit Suisse...	500 682	680	
Union de Banques Suisses...	500 572	551	
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000 1587	1650	
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000 1190	1235	
C. F. Bally S.A. ...	1000 952	960	
Fabrique de Machines Oerlikon...	500 581	585	
Entreprises Sulzer ...	1000 680	650	
S.A. Brown Boveri (new) ...	500 347	333	
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	400 173	170	
Choc. Suisses Peter-Cailler-Kohler	100 103	104	
Comp. de Navig's sur le Lac Léman	500 483	468	

CONCERT de M. RODOLPHE GAILLARD.

Nous avons le plaisir d'annoncer à nos lecteurs le prochain récital de Mr. Rodolphe Gaillard, à Wigmore Hall, le mercredi 17 Janvier, le seul qu'il donnera à Londres cette saison, avant son départ pour une nouvelle tournée de concerts à l'étranger.

Le programme des plus riches et variés, dans les quatre langues, comprendra entre autres des œuvres de Schubert et Schumann dont plusieurs encore non présentées au public en Angleterre et une scène de Thaïs en français.

Mr. Gaillard sera assisté par Miss Maja Barina et Miss Marga Stella.

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