

Home news

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HOME NEWS

One of the first items to be dealt with by the new Swiss Parliament, which will meet at the beginning of next month, will be the appointment or re-election of speakers and ministers. The National Council will, according to tradition, be presided over by the former vice-president, Dr. Emil Hofmann (Democrat, Frauenfeld), whilst in the States Council Dr. G. Keller of Aarau will occupy the chair. As to the Federal Council, all the ministers will be re-elected, as no resignations have taken place. Mr. Heinrich Häberlin, of Frauenfeld, will be the new Federal President. In this connection it is interesting to note that the canton of Thurgau supplies the two men occupying the highest positions, though in home politics Mr. Häberlin and Dr. Hofmann are impetuous opponents.

Under a proposal, which the electors sanctioned by 3,020 "ayes" to 1,580 "noes," the present constitution of the Ticino is to be slightly modified by the creation of communal councils in districts of over 1,000 inhabitants. This new departure does not seem to arouse any particular interest, as only 15 per cent. of the citizens went to the trouble of recording their votes.

In an appeal last week the Federal Tribunal in Lausanne gave a decision which is of great interest to many Swiss residing abroad. Real estate in Switzerland is taxed at its net value, i.e., the mortgage, if any, is deducted; to enjoy this concession, however, permanent residence in the country is essential. The fiscal authorities of the canton of Thurgau insisted on the full tax on a property which last year was bought by a lady for Frs. 170,000. During the proceedings it transpired that the lady's brother, who is in business in Madrid, and who spent his holidays on this estate, had advanced her the whole of the purchase money, partly against a mortgage. The Lausanne tribunal held that, though the estate was ostensibly in the name of the sister, her position and own financial means deprived the transaction of its genuineness, so that her brother must be considered as the real owner, who, of course, is not entitled to the abatement referred to.

Contrary to a decision by the cantonal authorities of Appenzell A.R., disallowing two local dental practitioners the use of their American doctor degrees, the Federal Tribunal has enacted that such foreign distinctions may be used as long as their origin was clearly stated.

For pretending to cure by health prayers a young woman in Thuzis (Grisons) and obstructing the attendance of a medical practitioner, a Christian Scientist, Frau Forster-Meuli of Splügen, was fined Frs. 80 by the local court; she appealed to the Federal Tribunal on the ground that the Constitution guaranteed freedom in religious matters, but the Lausanne tribunal confirmed the previous judgment.

On the arrival of the Orient express in Lausanne a man was found tied underneath a carriage; he was a Rumanian and had travelled in this position for 71 hours from Bucarest with the intention of getting to France in order to join the Foreign Legion in Morocco.

A modern way of obtaining money was practised by a Solothurn warehouseman, Robert Schraner, who was sentenced to four months imprisonment. He pretended to people whom he knew had relatives residing abroad, that he was the bearer of greetings and presents, but that the latter were unfortunately kept back at the frontier by customs officers pending the payment of duty. He found many dupes ready to part with cash, so as to enable him to release these presents.

For failing to choose the appropriate language in addressing a ticket collector when objecting to the payment of the usual surtax on express trains—in this instance 50 centimes—a commercial traveller who omitted to previously obtain the requisite ticket was fined at Olten Frs. 200.

A mysterious affair was discovered by an apprentice from Interlaken, who was visiting his godparents last Friday at a farmstead in Höflich, between Iseltwald and Giessbach: he found them both dead, apparently killed by a blood-stained chopper. They are the farmer Gottfried Bhend and his wife, and no trace has yet been found

of the supposed murderer, nor is there any motive evident, as none of the ready cash or other property has been abstracted.

For shooting and killing Pietro Rovelli, who refused his consent to the marriage of his daughter with his nephew Luigi, the latter has been sentenced by the Locarno assizes to ten years imprisonment.

An electrician, named Sigrist, from Uster, was electrocuted at Urnäsch (Appenzell) during coming into contact with a high-tension circuit.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Ever and anon we talk of the weather. We do. And ever and anon the weather is worth talking about. It is. But sometimes it is such as to make talk difficult. The other Sunday morning, armed with an arsenal of golf clubs and a few golf balls, the family motored over to Langdon Hills, where the hospitable landlord had invited us to use the private links opposite the Crown for practice. We got there by about half-past ten, but upon venturing forth on to the links we were nearly blown over. The wind was so gusty and strong, so searching and cold that it needed some sustained effort to keep standing and a good many swings to keep the blood from freezing. Well, we did a couple of rounds, the sun shone intermittently, and the views from that famous vantage point were splendid. In the north we could discern the wireless masts of Chelmsford, in the east the water tower of Bexley, the pier at Southend and the intervening country, in the west the church at Brentwood. And the grass in some parts of the rough was so high that a good few balls await lucky finders! The return journey was done—after something warming had been partaken of, of course—in record time over deserted roads, and Sunday dinner and a sit-down near the cosy fire afterwards were wonderful. Now, what I am driving at is this: if it had not been that both Mrs. 'Kyburg' and self wanted to play golf, I don't think for a moment we would have gone out at all that cold morning. Therefore, if the weather in its fiercer moods is to be beaten, it requires some strong inducement to get us comfort-lovers on the war-path, and then it can be done, and the resulting glow of satisfaction at having conquered—not to forget the physical well-being after the battle—is worth the effort.

And talking of the weather—or was it golf?—what about the little effort the Clerk of the Weather put up on the 9th November for the show? Was it not glorious, and did not the children have a fine time! I do not remember having ever seen so many children in the City, and I have been in town on Lord Mayor's Show Day more years than I care to remember. That night my train was simply packed, just as in summertime, with tired but happy-looking youngsters, hugging their Lord Mayor's coaches and their wonderful panoramas which can be pulled out and in.

Then came Tuesday. *Winter*, with sleet, fog, drizzle, and a rawness that penetrated into the innermost cockles of your heart and left it stone-cold. Vividly I remembered the old ditty:—

Es schneielet, es beieleit,
Es gaht en böse Wind,
Es friered alli Vögel
Und alli arme Chind.

And that will do for to-day. S'nice morning, isn't it?

Of course, I cannot get away from the wintry weather all at once. The very first thing, among the gleanings I have collected for this week, is the following from *The Lady* (29th Oct.):—

How Winter Sports began.

Winter sports have attained enormous popularity in a moderately short time. Since in Britain snow and ice have been conspicuous by their absence for many years, the habit of going abroad for ski-ing and skating has spread like quicksilver through the country. So much so that business men stay at home in July and August and take their "summer" holiday in winter, when they can be sure of ideal conditions—sport, snow, and sunshine all together.

Probably very few of the thousands who enjoy Alpine sports realise that they owe their pleasure to a political refugee, a Dr. Alexander Spengler, who revealed the possibilities of winter weather in the Alps.

Dr. Spengler lived at Davos in 1853, and exercised his profession. The splendid health of the natives impressed him, and their abso-

lute immunity from chest complaints struck him as exceptional. In the face of much ridicule he advocated invalids sojourning in Switzerland in winter, and where invalids stayed for health, healthy people followed for pleasure, and one sport after another was introduced to give exercise and occupation.

Ski-ing came from Norway, tobogganing from Canada, and curling from the Scots. British visitors made the first skating rink at Davos in 1867, but although they skated in their traditional style, it was an American dancing master called Jackson Haines who came to Northern Europe in 1864 and taught the method of progressing on ice which is most popular to-day. He was the first person to dance on skates, and his influence has been the greatest of all in modern skating.

The international style that he originated, with the graceful, free movements, is now the rule everywhere, and all championships and chief competitions are held under the auspices of the National Skating Association of this country.

Skating is no new sport, for, in 1498, St. Lydwina, the patron saint of skaters, met with an accident on ice in Holland from which she never recovered. She was supposed to have worked miracles, and was beatified in 1616 and sanctified in 1890. Relics of her saintliness may be seen in a monastery in Brussels.

Dr. Johnson, who is said to have watched skating on the Serpentine, wrote the following lines at the request of Mrs. Thrale:—

"O'er crackling ice and gulfs profound,
With nimble glide the skaters play,
O'er treacherous pleasure's flow'ry ground,
Thus lightly skim and haste away."

Another poet was moved to write:—

"Bless me, what a very nice
And comfortable trade is
This capering on ice
And skating with the ladies."

In case some of our readers—you would be surprised to know how many *English* readers we can boast of!—do not know Switzerland yet or have a rather hazy notion of it, the necessary and important knowledge will be given them now:—

Geography without Tears: Switzerland.

The People (25th Oct.):—

Switzerland is a lumpy country. It is all ups and downs. It is also a very small country, which is rather a good job, because if it were all rolled out flat, it would stretch all over Europe.

The air of Switzerland is very clear and beautiful. It has a tang of champagne. There is no extra charge for this. Visitors to Switzerland are advised to consume as much Swiss air as they possibly can. It is the only thing they will get for nothing in the country.

Switzerland is a land of gorgeous colours—golden sunshine, bright blue sky, dazzling white snow, and the Fair Isle pull-overs of the American tourists.

The famous Swiss sunset, or Alpine glow, turns the sky a delicate purple. The famous Swiss hotel bill turns the English visitor a delicate green. In other words, it does him brown.

There are no poor people in Switzerland. Practically all the inhabitants are hotel proprietors. Some of them are even hotel porters.

The chief industries of Switzerland are yodelling and milking condensed cows.

The favoured Alpine sport is ski-ing (pronounced she-ing). A pair of floor-boards are strapped to the victim's feet, and he is pushed down the mountain side. And they call it sport. Does it hurt when you fall? Believe me, ski-ing is believing.

The only thing I would advise intending winter-sportsmen and sports-ladies to do, when they tumble about in the snow, is to be very careful not to fall among the wild sheep, of which the *Daily Mail* (26th Oct.) says:—

Following the example of the herds of chamois which exist in the neighbourhood, a flock of sheep, turned loose some time ago in the Mount Arvel chain, in the Rhone valley, and which have since become wild and impossible to approach, have taken to the topmost peaks.

The authorities have now given chamois hunters permission to shoot them.

Suppose William Tell had been a mighty hunter of sheep! I doubt whether he would have attained the dignity of a national hero.

It's a long way to Tipperary, but Tipperary members of the local Co-operative Creamery Society, one of the best managed and most success-