

# Home news

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# The Swiss Observer

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## RAIL V. ROAD.

At the opening of the motor show in Geneva, an important official pronouncement was made on rail and road competition. Swiss railways, it was stated, could not be allowed to drift into deficit, as they represented one-sixth of the national capital. Freight and passenger rates could not be increased, the only alternative was, accordingly, to check the shifting of traffic from rail to road. But compulsory steps against road traffic were difficult. Railways would probably find salvation in healthy competition if they were freed from the legislative shackles which had been the counterpart of their past monopoly.

## FOUR HUNDRED JOURNALS REPRESENTED AT GENEVA.

Some 150 writers, editors, correspondents, broadcasters and publicists, coming from more than 40 countries and representing every shade of political feeling are in Geneva for the Disarmament Conference. According to the records of the Information Section of the League of Nations, there are 400 newspapers and periodicals represented. The *United States* heads the list with 75 newspapermen, followed by *France*. The *Italian Fascist* contingent numbers 15, *Japan* and *China* have each sent 15 men, *Poland's* group totals 25, *Belgium's* and *Austria's* 12 each, *Sweden's* and *Czechoslovakia's* 15 each, *Switzerland's* 30, *Hungary's* 10, and *Great Britain's* 30. For the first time representatives of an *Icelandic* and an *Albanian* newspaper have put in an appearance.

## SWISS COIN FETCHES £180.

The "gold rush" has brought to light the existence of a rare Swiss 17-ducat piece of the 17th century which was sold at a London sale-room.

Nothing is known about the coin, but experts from Switzerland, Berlin, and Paris came to London to see it. It was among a lot of gold articles which were to be consigned to the melting pot. It was sent to experts for examination and found to be a rarity. The value of the gold in it is about £8.

To-day ten experts were anxious to obtain the coin, which bears a view of Berne.

Starting at £50, there was an exciting duel of "Fives," and the hammer did not fall until £180 was reached.

## LOCAL.

### ZURICH.

The town council has voted a credit of 410,000fr. for the renovation of the Quai Bridge.

### BERNE.

The Pension and Confiserie "Favorit" on the Beatenberg has been destroyed by fire, only a small part of the furniture could be saved.

\* \* \*

A terrible tragedy took place last Thursday at Burgdorf. The wife of Dr. Leo Wolf-Grütter, Professor at the "Gymnasium," who suffered lately from a nervous depression committed suicide, this upset her husband to such a degree, that in a fit of despair he shot himself. It is reported that the couple lived very happily together.

### BASLE.

The City of Basle has for centuries been a centre of the commercial and intellectual life of Europe, and in 1916 became the modern fair town of Switzerland. Every Spring the Swiss Industries Fair is held there, and the date of the fair has been fixed this year for April 2nd to 12th. On account of Switzerland's industrial and commercial activities, the Basle fair arouses great international interest, and every year its foreign service department registers visitors from over thirty States. Samples of twenty different groups of Swiss industry and trade are exhibited in four great halls, and altogether about 1,000 industrial establishments participate. An impetus is given both to technical and commercial progress by the fair, and foreign buyers should find it well worth visiting.

\* \* \*

From Basle comes the news of the death of Prof. Karl Spiro, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Basle.

\* \* \*

Dr. h.c. Rudolf Geigy-Schlumberger has celebrated his 70th birthday. M. Geigy is a

Director of the well-known Chemical works J. R. Geigy A.G. From 1917-1930 he was President of the Board of the above-mentioned firm. During many years M. Geigy has been an eminent personality in the industrial circles of his native town, and he enjoyed a great reputation all over Switzerland, as a keen and far-seeing business man.

## SOLOTHURN.

Dr. A. Affolter, a former Federal Judge has died; he only resigned from his distinguished office a year ago. Dr. Affolter was a great lawyer and eminent judge, and has written many books on judicial subjects.

## GENEVA.

M. Paul Pictet, former President of the Grand Council, and a fervent partisan of the Zone Dispute has celebrated his 70th birthday.

\* \* \*

The Disarmament Conference has at least had the effect of providing Geneva with distinguished audiences for distinguished theatrical fare, and the "Association of the Interests of Geneva" has taken full advantage of the occasion to present a number of excellent operatic performances, of which those given by the Scala company of Milan have been easily the most popular.

The operas performed were "The Barber of Seville," "La Tosca," "Rigoletto," and "The Secret Marriage," and it must have been a matter of great satisfaction to the hundreds of delegates who have met from all corners of the world to hear them in the tongue in which they were written and sung by perhaps the greatest exponents of operatic art.

The Grand Theatre, at which these performances are being given, has an interesting history.

Many years ago, the Duke of Brunswick, in a fit of pique against his own countrymen, made a will, leaving his money to Geneva for the purpose of founding a theatre.

Later, in another fit of pique, this time against the Genevese, he made arrangements to have his will altered, but, fortunately for the people of Geneva, he died before he could put this into effect.

The theatre, which is after the style of the Paris Opera, has large and ornate salons hung with red plush curtains and magnificent chandeliers in the best opera house fashion, and these salons have, during the last few weeks, seen the most celebrated statesmen in the world.

The brilliance of the salons during the long intervals is easy to imagine, for there is one long promenade of magnificently gowned and jewelled women, accompanied by diplomats of every race.

Possibly in no one place in the world could such a gathering be seen except in Geneva.

## ST. GALLEN.

The death of Prof. Dr. Johannes Egli at the age of 76 is reported from St. Gallen. Prof. Egli was, from 1893-1923, Teacher of the Latin and Greek languages at the Kantonsschule; he was also the author of many historical books.

## SCHAFFHAUSEN.

The latest victim of the Influenza Epidemic in Switzerland is National Councillor A. Rahm, who died at Unter Hallau at the early age of 47. The deceased entered Parliament in 1931 as successor to Dr. Waldvogel. M. Rahm was Manager of the Konservfabrik Hallau.

## NIDWALDEN.

National Councillor Hans von Matt has died at the age of 63. M. v. Matt was, in his younger days, Editor of the "Nidwalder Volksblatt" and the "Monatsrosen," and later became a member of the cantonal Government.

## TICINO.

At Lugano and the neighbouring villages the tocsin had to be sounded on account of a forest fire which broke out at the foot of Monte Bré, near the little village of Gandria, on Lake Lugano, well known to all tourists. Flames, swept upwards by a tempestuous wind, devastated orchards, vineyards, and forest land, and threatened to destroy the numerous hamlets and private villas which are dotted over the mountain side.

Villagers who hastened from all sides managed to arrest the fire by cutting down trees on a wide belt and digging a trench.

## HOME NEWS

(Compiled by courtesy of the following contemporaries: National Zeitung, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, St. Galler Tagblatt, Vaterland and Tribune de Genève).

## FEDERAL.

### FRANCO-SWISS TRADE DISCUSSIONS.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris has issued a *communiqué* on the state of the Franco-Swiss discussions, begun here on Wednesday, and to be resumed after Easter, of which the following is a summary:—

It has been unanimously agreed that reciprocal commercial relations between France and Switzerland ought to be maintained and developed, but that restrictions on trade, where they are inevitable, ought to be applied as liberally as possible. A basic agreement has been established along these lines. The conversations have also covered other questions on which the French Government has declared its desire to satisfy Swiss desires. M. Tardieu has proposed the establishment by a provisional agreement of reciprocal facilities for the exchange of goods and the movement of individuals across the frontier from either side in the neighbourhood of Geneva. The representative of the Swiss Federal Government, M. Schultess, has agreed to place this proposal before his Government. M. Tardieu and M. Schultess agree that such a provisional agreement could neither modify nor delay the judicial process on Free Zones now before The Hague Court.

### THE FRANCO-SWISS FREE ZONES.

Further negotiations for a settlement of the dispute about the Franco-Swiss free zones began in Paris between M. Tardieu, the Prime Minister, with the Ministers of Finance and Commerce, on the one hand, and Herr Schultess, the Vice-President of the Swiss Federal Government, with Herr Stucki, Director of Commercial Agreements, on the other. A *communiqué* issued from the Quai d'Orsay makes it clear that both parties wish to extend the discussion over the whole field of economic relations and to reach, if possible, a satisfactory agreement covering trade in general.

### DIPLOMATIC CHANGES.

Monsieur Ferd. von Salis, Swiss Minister for Rumania, Greece and Yugo-Slavia has tendered his resignation to the Federal Council. M. von Salis is a native of Soglio (Grisons), and is residing at Bucerest.

Rumours of the imminent resignation of Dr. Rüfenacht, Swiss Minister in Berlin have been current in Parliamentary and Diplomatic circles. The rumours have not been confirmed nor contradicted, and it is a well-known fact that the health of our Minister in Berlin has not been too good, owing to overwork. Should Dr. Rüfenacht retire from his post, Switzerland would lose in him one of her most able diplomats, and one who enjoys a great reputation in the German Capital.

### WIDENING OF THE ST. GOTTHARD LINE.

The last stage in the doubling of the St. Gotthard main line is now in progress, and the final obstacle has been overcome by the piercing of a second tunnel through the Ceneri *massif*, on the last remaining single line stretch, 20 kilometres long, between Giubiasco and Lugano. The new Ceneri tunnel is 1,689 metres long, is on a gradient of 2.29 per cent. (1 in 44), and the boring of it occupied only six months, compared with the four years taken over the construction of the first tunnel. The latter was completed in 1882. In view of its important international connections, it was originally intended that the St. Gotthard line should be double throughout; but, owing solely to financial restrictions, these intentions have been realised only in this, the fiftieth year of its existence. The short La Costa tunnel was widened in order to take double track without disturbing the traffic passing through it by building the new arch outside the old one and eventually pulling down the intervening shell.

R.G.