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A preliminary international conference took place at Geneva in October 1863, and on August 22 1864, the International Red Cross treaty was signed in a chamber of the City Hall at Geneva, which is now known as the Alabama Room, the Alabama Claims Commission having convened there from December 15, 1871 until September 14, 1872.

As a compliment to Switzerland the Swiss flag in reversed colours, i.e. a red cross on a white field, was adopted as the insignia of everything connected with the Red Cross.

The International Red Cross is observing its 75th anniversary this year. Humanity, again distressed by warfare will need its labour of devotion and sacrifice more than ever.

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#### SWISS AS CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF IN FINNLAND.

Finnland, the unfortunate country now also involved in war, has a Swiss as leader of the General Staff of the Army. General Karl Lennart O e s c h, born in 1892 has a splendid record as a Finnish soldier. In the last war he fought as a volunteer against Russia, and now he has reached one of the highest positions, to again fight the old enemy.

SWISS FLEET. Two ships under the Swiss flag and "Switzerland" freshly painted on each side, loaded a quarter of a million bushel of oats in Philadelphia last November. The surprise of many a visitor along the wharfs can easily be visualised, as we have no ships on the high sea. Official news indicates that Switzerland actually chartered sixteen ships from Greek shipping lines. These ships bring essential food and other cargo from all over the world to Marseilles and Genoa for transit to Switzerland.

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#### NEWS IN BRIEF.

A New Year's broadcast takes place from Switzerland on January 1st at 5.45 p.m. (N.Z. time) on wavelength 20.46 and 26.31

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Our little neighbour in the East the Principality LIECHTENSTEIN has just declared its neutrality. Its Government has, through the Swiss Embassy, taken steps to request the Powers to recognise its neutrality. This little State may be looked upon as a curiosity as it is formally still at war with Prussia since 1866.

Already in September of last year when threatening war clouds began to darken the horizon the Swiss Federal Council instructed all the Embassies in foreign countries to organise a transport system for the Swiss who were desirous of returning to their native land, in case of war. The bulk of this important task fell to the Embassy in Paris inasmuch as it has to assist not only the Swiss in France, but also all comers of our nationality from other countries, who have to travel through France. In all respective states, places have been publicly appointed where the Swiss may assemble.

On September 5th it was reported from Geneva that 40,000 Swiss were expected to arrive there from France by special trains. The population has been preparing to receive these unfortunate victims of evacuation.

Our appeal for a couple of Christmas Hampers for two unfortunate compatriots seems to have awakened some criticism amongst our members. The question is raised why the Society could not assist from its own funds.

We wish to point out that the society's funds, still small enough, are not intended for distribution of Christmas presents. More deserving and urgent cases will doubtless crop up one day; in fact a case is just reported of a young Swiss who has been in hospital for over six months, who is probably a cripple for life and is now absolutely penniless. Such unfortunate compatriots should of course be assisted but we repeat this can only be done if all our members do their share and contribute the subscription promptly and regularly. We know of various warm-hearted countrymen who would be disappointed if they could not do their part, and that is why we published our appeal to give everyone the opportunity to help. This appeal was meant for Swiss books more than anything else. One of the two compatriots in question is unable to read or write English and unknown to us he has been an inmate of a mental hospital for many years. It is distressing to think of this poor fellow without friends. He also appears to like flower seeds, as he has a small garden plot allotted for his hobby. The other patient is also a sad case, although he is well versed in the English language. Anyone wishing to contribute something, please communicate with the Secretary.

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#### SWISS SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES WELL CARED FOR.

Neutral Switzerland with a population of 4,068,000 has an army of 500,000 men guarding our frontiers. For the vital national defence she spends daily five million Swiss Francs, or \$1,230,000, a sum which calls for tremendous sacrifices on the part of her people. However, these huge military expenses are only a part of the burden which Swiss citizens have to bear in these critical days.

With the men keeping watch at the front, girls and women of all ages have assumed duties normally confined to the stronger sex. In factories, workshops and on farms they are proudly substituting or taking over additional work. Delicate or old ladies are busily sewing and knitting for the soldiers, while children, everywhere, particularly in rural districts, are proving surprisingly efficient helpers. If ever there were women of leisure in Switzerland these are no more. Almost overnight they have become Red Cross workers, also seamstresses and laundresses who in specially organised "war laundries" or in their own homes, take care of the laundry of soldiers who are unable to have this work done for themselves.

During the World War of 1914-1918 Switzerland quickly made the discovery that the general well-being of her soldiers, on or off duty, was quite as important as adequate military equipment.

In the present emergency the Central Committee for the Welfare of Swiss Soldiers at Berne inaugurated its activities immediately after Army mobilization, based on the experience made 25 years ago. Here soldiers' wives with children may apply for advice, and villages where soldiers have been stationed may obtain information regarding the establishment of Soldiers' Sitting Rooms. Enquiries pour into this bureau in overwhelming numbers, but equally numerous are the offers of volunteers to help.

Financial support to needy families of Swiss soldiers is given by the Federal and Cantonal governments at the rate of 75% and 25% respectively. This assistance is in no way considered as "relief of the poor". In the larger towns the rate is Frs. 2.90 per adult and Frs. 1-2 per child according to age. In small towns this relief is set at Frs. 2.60 Frs. 0.80 and Frs 1.70, while in rural districts the amounts are Frs. 2.20, Frs. 0.70 and Frs. 1.40.