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HOME NEWS

The French Republic pays Homage to the Swiss Frontier Towns of Basle and Schaffhausen.

On Sunday last a plaque fixed at the "Elsässer-Bahnhof" in Basle was unveiled, bearing the following inscription:—

"192,000 évacués des régions occupées du nord de la France ont passé par Bâle d'octobre 1917 à octobre 1918 et ont été assistés et réconfortés par le comité suisse de rapatriement de Bâle et la population de Bâle. En témoignage de gratitude."

There were present at the ceremony, among others: M. Gaston Vidal, Under-Secretary of State, Generals Paul and Ogier, several French Senators and Deputies, M. Alphonse Dunant, Swiss Minister in Paris, National Councillor Niederhäuser, Colonel von der Muehl, representing the Federal Political Department, Colonel Bohny, the President of the Swiss Red Cross Society, Colonel Dietscher and M. H. Micheli, from the International Red Cross.

After the Basle ceremony a special train conveyed the entire party to Schaffhausen, where it was joined by the French Ambassador and Madame Allizé.

Practically the whole population of the town, headed by the cantonal and municipal authorities, had assembled before the station to receive the guests of the day, who were then conveyed in motor cars to the Town Hall, where the marble plaque inscribed:

"La France reconnaissante à la Suisse consolatrice" was handed over to the authorities of Schaffhausen.

From the Town Hall the assembly proceeded to the idyllic "Wald-Friedhof," where floral tributes were deposited on the graves of those French refugees who died at Schaffhausen during their sojourn there. Stadtpräsident Dr. Pletscher addressed the gathering, and M. Vidal, French Under-Secretary of State, and M. Verlot, Deputy, replied. The French Ambassador, M. Allizé, then placed a wreath on the tomb of those Swiss soldiers who died while mobilized.

After a dinner at the Casino, a visit of inspection was made to the monument by the well-known French sculptor, M. Landowski, who was also present. It is erected on a plateau overlooking the Rhine, and symbolises Switzerland as a Sister of Mercy embracing a mother and her child. The monument constitutes in its simplicity one of the most beautiful and touching tributes to our country for its humane work during the late war.

During the journey to and from the Falls of the Rhine the whole of the route was lined by the people of Schaffhausen, whose ovations to the guests were wholeheartedly enthusiastic.

Having returned to Basle, the guests and the municipal authorities met in the "Three Kings Hotel" for dinner, in the course of which further speeches were made, thus terminating a function which will not fail to leave gratifying impressions.

The Federal Council has re-appointed the former Swiss Delegates, viz., Federal Councillor G. Motta, States Councillor Dr. Usteri, and ex-Federal Councillor Gustave Ador, for the ensuing session of the League of Nations.

National Councillor Dr. Forrer has been appointed as deputy member of the Swiss Delegation, and Professor Dr. Burckhardt (Berne) will be attached as judicial expert.

The reply which the Swiss Federal Council has sent to the League of Nations, in answer to two questions formulated by the latter on the subject of restricting the military budgets for the years 1923-24, and the future military requirements of Switzerland, is summarised in the "N.Z.Z." as follows:—

"Die Schweiz ist als kleiner Binnenstaat, welcher der wichtigsten Rohmaterialien entbehrt, auf ein friedliches Einvernehmen mit seinen Nachbarn angewiesen und befolgt seit Jahrhunderten eine Politik der Neutralität. Diese Politik wurde im Jahre 1815 ausdrücklich als im Interesse Europas liegend von den Mächten anerkannt und neuerdings im Jahre 1920 durch den Londoner Vertrag sanktioniert. Diese Neutralitätspolitik gibt der Schweiz nicht nur ein Recht auf die Aufrechterhaltung einer angemessenen Wehrmacht, sondern macht ihr dieselbe geradezu zur internationalen Pflicht. Es ist hierbei die im Verhältnis zur Bevölkerungszahl des Landes sehr ausgedehnte Grenze in Berücksichtigung zu ziehen. Die Schweiz hat immerhin in der Ausbildung und Ausrüstung der Truppen sich auf das strikt Notwendige beschränkt. Es wird daran erinnert, dass die Ausbildungszeit der Mannschaft zwischen 65 und 90 Tagen schwankt, und dass die Schweiz sowohl der Schwerartillerie als auch anderer technischer Hilfsmittel der Neuzeit entbehrt. Der Krieg hat keine Aenderung gebracht. Während zweier Jahre nach dem Kriege war unser militärischer Betrieb sozusagen stillgelegt. Dann wurde die Dienstpflicht um ein Jahr hinausgeschoben und die Tauglichkeitsanforderungen wurden erhöht und damit eine gewisse Reduktion des Mannschaftsbestandes herbeigeführt. Es wird geprüft, ob weitere Ersparnis-massnahmen nötig sind. Ein Abgehen von der allgemeinen Wehrpflicht, die mit unserm Milizsystem eng zusammenhängt, wäre ein äusserst schwieriges Problem für unser Land. Wenn alle Staaten zu unserm politischen und militärischen System übergehen würden, so wäre die Abrüstungsfrage von selbst gelöst.

Die Anfrage, ob die Schweiz bereit wäre, sich zu verpflichten, in den Militärbudgets für die Jahre 1923 und 1924 keine Erhöhung gegenüber den Vorjahren eintreten zu lassen, beantwortet der Bundesrat dahin, dass die Schweiz sich damit einverstanden erklären könne, unter dem Vorbehalt, dass die übrigen Staaten diese Verpflichtung ebenfalls eingehen, und unter dem weitem Vorbehalt, dass in der fraglichen Zeit keine ausserordentlichen Ereignisse eintreten."

As the construction of the projected linking up railway at Geneva cannot yet be commenced, the Federal Council

has decided, in conjunction with the Genevese authorities, to devote the granted credit of two million francs for other emergency works which are to be carried out in Geneva for the purpose of combating unemployment.

* * *

Over 200 members of the gymnastic section of the "Schweizerverein New York" and the "Schweizer Turnverein Hudson County, N.Y." who will participate at the Federal Gymnastic Festival, which takes place in St. Gall on the 21st to 25th of this month, reached Basle this week. The "New York Swiss" were heartily greeted at the station by the "Basler Liederkränz" and the "Basler Bürgerturnverein."

* * *

The financial result of the Eidgenössische Sängertag, recently held in Lucerne, under weather conditions which were far from being propitious, will, according to advance estimates show a net profit of 100,000 frs. This amount will be divided among the three Lucerne Glee Societies, who were the hosts on this occasion, and various Benevolent Societies.

* * *

At the South-German Musical Festival in Stuttgart the "Musikverein Harmonie," from Wädenswil, secured First Prize and a Gold Cup.

* * *

OBITUARY.

Colonel Hermann Blaser, Chief of the Federal Department for Elementary Military Training and Voluntary Rifle Practice, died at Berne, aged 49, in consequence of cerebral hemorrhage after one day's illness.

His early death is considered a great loss, as he was a gifted officer of rare talent, whose organising abilities and foresight particularly developed and benefitted the physical training and shooting practices of Switzerland's youth.

Colonel Blaser was member of the General Staff during the whole period of the war. For two years he commanded the 13th Regiment, and from 1918 to 1921 he occupied the position of Chief of Staff.

* * *

Lieutenant-Colonel E. Federspiel, from Liestal, was conducting troop operations near Yverdon last week, when he suddenly became unwell. He sat down at the side of a road and expired a few minutes later from heart failure.

NOTES & GLEANINGS.

It is a human weakness to deduce general conclusions from particular instances, especially when it helps to relieve one's feelings. A correspondent in the *Daily Sketch* (July 5th) finds Swiss Customs officials a little too zealous, in fact, he bluntly calls it a "Customs Scandal." An Englishman returning from Italy had to pay a duty equivalent to 14s. for an alabaster image which he had bought for 11s. in Milan. We suppose the tax was imposed in accordance with the tariff, and although to stay-at-homes this modern piracy may seem atrocious, those who have travelled about of late have no lack of similar and better tales. The same note is struck in another reference in the *Daily Express* (July 4th), where "according to latest advices from the 'Alps the charge for a hot bath is four shillings, and for 'coffee for two five shillings.'" Alps is, of course, a vague term, but to the ordinary reader this would convey that these are the generally recognised charges; we doubt whether the informant could substantiate his complaint,

unless he stayed at one of the most exclusive hotels. However, this would-be "gentleman with a duster" does not stop at trivialities, for he makes the startling statement that "the number of pure German visitors is simply colossal." We fancy he ought to have a seat on the Allied Committee of Guarantees, where his plausibility might possibly convince the experts that the wealth of the Germans is phenomenal! These press notices are apt to do Switzerland a lot of harm if allowed to go unchallenged; we hope that some readers of our influential contemporary have taken up the cudgels in the interests of fairness and accuracy, and we doubt not that in due course the paragraph referred to will be rectified. In the meantime we reproduce a letter addressed to the *Daily Express* on July 4th by an English lady, who says:—

"With your usual fairness will you allow me to comment on the first paragraph of 'By the Way' in to-day's 'Daily Express'?"

I am an Englishwoman, but have many Swiss friends and a wider knowledge of Switzerland and Swiss conditions than most of my compatriots.

It is true that German is spoken in many parts of Switzerland, but, to a foreigner's ears, the same language is spoken in England, Scotland, Ireland and America, although no one could accuse the inhabitants of those countries of the same characters, characteristics or political opinions.

Last summer I obtained excellent hotel accommodation in the Bernese Oberland for Frs. 12.— per day (roughly 4 gns. per week), receiving food, comfort and a kindly interest not usually procurable in England at far higher rates. It is true that hot baths cost Frs. 3.50 each, but at most English hotels the charge for mere apologies of hot baths is extortionate. In Switzerland one does obtain the real thing, and, further, literally gallons of hot water can be had in one's own room at any hour without extra charge. Coffee everywhere was obtainable at Fr. 1.— per person. Further, during the whole time I did not meet a single German, and they were everywhere conspicuous by their absence.

Switzerland is a wonderful little country of simple, kindly folk. She suffered cruelly through preserving strict neutrality during the war, and any English people who go there now can do so knowing that their money is helping a country worthy of help, and that they themselves will everywhere be welcomed and treated with scrupulous courtesy, kindness and fairness."

* * *

"A Swiss Walking Tour" is the title of a capital article by Carine Cadby in *The Queen* (July 8th), who states that "there is no holiday to beat a walking tour in 'Switzerland'; in fact, one is almost led to believe the 'Swiss Alps were designed especially for this purpose.'" Another similar description is contained in the *Gentlewoman* (July 8th).

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