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A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR READERS!

HOME NEWS

The meeting, referred to in the last issue of *The Swiss Observer*, to be held at Berne, in order to discuss the creation of a parliamentary group to safeguard the interests of Swiss citizens abroad, took place on December 19th. It was attended by a number of deputies representing all political groups, except the Socialist party, and was presided over by National Councillor Dollfus.

Mr. Michel and Mr. Burren explained the aims of the group they desired to form, and Mr. Schurz recalled the activities in this direction of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique with its manifold ramifications abroad. Mr. Dollfus observed that, though they might be of assistance to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, the group they proposed to create would be quite distinct from that society and should not be confounded with it. He added that the Nouvelle Société Helvétique had rendered signal services to Switzerland by discouraging the denationalisation of the Swiss abroad. Mr. Dollfus went on to describe the plight of Swiss citizens in Austria and Germany and pointed out the necessity of coming to their aid and of assisting Swiss emigration towards countries which offered some chance of success. Mr. Dollfus also laid stress on the fact that much more was done by other countries for their compatriots in Switzerland than by the Confederation for the Swiss abroad. As an instance he cited the fact that, acting on the advice of Mr. Brügger, the State Council refused to vote Fr. 10,000 to subsidise Swiss schools abroad, while Germany, notwithstanding her precarious finances, voted 8,000 gold marks for the same purpose. The President's remarks were endorsed by the députés de l'abattoir, Spiehiger, Baumberger, Bétoni and Walther, and it was unanimously decided to constitute the proposed group, which should present its programme at the next parliamentary session. A commission was appointed of five députés, National Councillors Mayer, Michel, Dollfus, and State Councillors Keller and Winiger, to elaborate the programme.

At the request of the Federal Council a credit of Fr. 623,000 has been voted for acquiring the property at Engehalde, near Berne, where the old Swiss abattoirs were situated, for the purpose of a repairing garage for the Federal Postal and Telegraphic Motor Services.

The budget for 1923 of the Canton of Basle-Ville forecasts a deficit of nine and a half million francs, i.e., about three millions more than that for the present year.

The former Paris banker, Mr. Hermann Herold, the well-known Grisons philanthropist, has given to the "Société de Bienfaisance Suisse" two houses in Paris, containing about 25 beds, which have been used by him as orphanages for the last 20 years.

A report has been presented to the two Chambers by General Willy on the activities of the Swiss Army during the period of hostilities. This report has given rise to a somewhat heated discussion, and it is probable that some modification will be made, more clearly defining the powers of, and relations between, the civil and military authorities in time of war.

The foundation "Pour la Vieillesse" has received a further anonymous donation of Fr. 12,000, addressed to the *Basler Anzeiger*.

The Swiss Customs officials have had storms of imprecations hurled at their devoted heads by irate travellers, shivering on draughty platforms during the most deliberate and painstaking examination of their belongings. The excellent catch made at Basle, thanks to the tenacity of one of these functionaries, will, we trust, not unduly fan their ardour in future. A young man alighted the other day from the Paris express, serene in the possession of

papers testifying to his Swiss nationality. He had passed the French Customs control and apparently felt he had safely reached his goal. But he had counted without the astute Swiss Customs official, who, like a Cerberus in uniform, pounced upon his trunk, the bottom of which appeared to him of suspicious thickness. The young man's airy explanations that the double bottom was a quite innocent affair did not convince this vigilant guardian of the interests of national revenue, and a search of the hiding place revealed a most interesting collection of military documents which appear to have been abstracted from the French Ministry of War. The papers include a letter addressed to Chicherin at Lausanne, to be delivered presumably by the bearer. The young man, who is alleged to be Russian by birth and to reside in Berlin, calls himself Kirschbaum, and his papers of Swiss naturalization are apparently in order. He has been put under provisional arrest, so that this find falls into the unsuspecting lap of the Federal authorities, instead of into the expectant hands of the Soviet representatives. A demand for Kirschbaum's extradition has been made by France, but for the present the demand has been refused. In the meantime the French military authorities are investigating this extraordinary case with a view to verifying the authenticity of the stolen documents and discovering accomplices in the theft, while the chagrined French Customs officials are gnashing their teeth at having allowed this harvest from the "cherry-tree" to slip through their fingers.

On Christmas Eve, Alt-Bundesrat Emil Frey, formerly Director of the International Bureau of the Telegraphic Union, passed away at his birthplace, Arlesheim, near Basle, in his 85th year.

The life of this illustrious Swiss politician was filled with admirable work for the welfare of his compatriots, his sympathies being particularly drawn towards the alleviation of the workers' lot. He was President of the Swiss Confederation in 1894.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

LES PONTS DE FRIBOURG.

Samedi après-midi, foire de la St-Nicolas, c'était fête à Fribourg:

Le vieux et célèbre pont suspendu de Zähringen, va disparaître et sera remplacé bientôt par un nouveau pont en pierre. Mgr. Besson, évêque de Lausanne et Genève, a bénit la première pierre de la nouvelle construction aux sons du canon, et en présence de M. le conseiller fédéral Musy, des autorités cantonales et communales de Fribourg, et d'un nombreux public, M. Chatton, vice-président du Conseil d'Etat, fit un bref discours.

La cérémonie terminée un immense cortège se forma au Bourg, traversa la ville dans toute sa longueur et au milieu d'une grande affluence, se rendant à l'inauguration solennelle du pont de Pérrolles. Ce cortège comprenait les écoles, les représentants des pouvoirs législatifs, exécutifs et judiciaires, les ouvriers employés aux deux ponts, de nombreux sociétés et abbayes.

Depuis fort longtemps on réclamait la construction d'un pont à Pérrolles. Car les populations de toute la région, de la Basse Gruyère, de la Haute Suisse et du cercle de Mouret ne pouvaient jusqu'ici parvenir qu'après de longs détours, à la capitale, entourée, comme elle est, par les profondes gorges de la Sarine.

Le lien est enfin, définitivement établi. Et le pont de Pérrolles se détache splendidement au-dessus des sapins.

Sa construction a coûté 4 millions. D'une longueur totale de 555 mètres, il surplombe de 70 mètres le niveau de la rivière; sa largeur est de 10 mètres. Les 15 voûtes qui le portent sont de longueurs différentes, si bien que l'on a pu très justement dire qu'elles sont comme les pas innégaux d'un géant traversant la vallée profonde.

Une énorme foule assista à la cérémonie de l'inauguration. Une cinquantaine de bannières flottaient à l'entrée du pont. Mgr. Besson dit quelques paroles de remerciements et M. Buchs, président du Conseil d'Etat, au nom du Gouvernement, remit le pont de Pérrolles au peuple fribourgeois. Le Cantique suisse termina la cérémonie.

Au Café des Charmettes, on offrit une collation aux ouvriers des deux ponts.

En souvenir de cette inauguration, la Direction des travaux publics a fait éditer un fort bel album. (Le pont de Pérrolles, Imprimerie Delespre, Fribourg.)

La ville a été illuminée pendant la soirée. (Tribune de Lausanne.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The Winter Season.

Climatic conditions now prevailing in the Alps portend an excellent winter sports season; snow has fallen in nearly all districts, and sunny, frosty and windless weather predominates. Although January is generally considered the ideal month to start for the Swiss winter, the daily scenes at Victoria Station, when the two o'clock "winter sports express" leaves, are ample evidence of the exodus which has set in already. The very alluring offers made by some of the tourist agencies seem to have been freely taken advantage of. A fortnight's stay in a first-class hotel at places like Grindelwald or Adelboden is now advertised for £17 to £20, and this includes first-class return journey and all the extras at the hotel for heating, lighting, bath, etc. The great London illustrated papers are full of advice as to the most suitable dresses and sporting outfit and illustrate their ideas by a display of attractive models garbed according to the dictates of the latest fashion. Very little is left untold about the different resorts and the various sports. In *The Graphic* (Dec. 16th) Ward Muir gives the following interesting notes about the origin of skiing and its beneficial mental influence:

Some correspondence took place in the Press, last winter, relative to the exact date and whereabouts of the introduction of skiing into Switzerland. It was stated by one writer that Grindelwald was the scene of the first Swiss experiments with ski—which, of course, were invented in Norway. Davos countered the claim, with what justice I am not, however, in a position to judge. But this, I know, is certain that about the eighties of last century several British sportsmen brought ski to Davos.

John Addington Symonds, it will be remembered, had a villa at Davos, and his daughter (now Dame Katherine Furse) was probably the earliest woman skier in the Alps. About the same time Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was preaching the possibilities of skiing at Davos, and was one of the pioneers of actual tours on ski in this neighbourhood, now celebrated for its ski-tour facilities. Later, in 1901, the famous brothers Richardson came to Davos—after two winters' experience in Norway—and induced the Swiss themselves to take to skis: an event genuinely historical, for the Swiss are now amongst the finest skiers in Europe, and ski, it is interesting to note, are employed extensively in their army manoeuvres.

Indeed, everyone who has at heart the ideal of "ententes" should welcome the ski-ing boom, if for this reason alone, that the native Swiss and the foreign amusement-seeker meet on common terms when ski-ing. The sport is democratic—it costs next to nothing—so the rich man is at no advantage over the poor. In fact, the poor man, owing to his skill and local knowledge, is often sought by the rich man as a very desirable comrade on any ambitious exploration of the passes. Nothing is more striking, at a ski-centre like Davos, than the warm friendships which spring up between the hotel visitors and the local ski adepts, some of the latter being shopkeepers, barbers, farm hands, and the like, as well as professional guides.

The same writer, in *The Sphere* (Dec. 16th), gives us an idea of the amount of labour and money spent in preparing some of the skating rinks and toboggan runs. He says:

Rink-making involves the levelling of a huge area of ground and the laying-on of water mains, carefully protected from frost, and hydrants for the hoses. In some of the resorts the levelled ground is inundated with skin after skin of water as the autumn advances; in others the rink is not commenced until snow falls, because the basis of the rink is snow, packed solid, and, when it has reached the consistency of a marble pavement, sprayed and sprayed again until it becomes glassy.

The overseer in charge of the rink-making and rink-maintenance at any of the major resorts is a highly-paid expert whose craft almost deserves the title of engineering—though it must be combined with considerable acumen in weather-prophecy. The building of the larger toboggan runs is also a job demanding technical knowledge. The visitor who has seen one of these big winter-sport resorts at midsummer—Davos, for instance—will find a wide, bare path winding through the woods and down the mountain side; and here and there this inexplicable path is still more inexplicably crossed by foot-bridges, arched like those on a willow-pattern plate. This path (or, in most of its course, rather a trench than a path) is the toboggan run. Its gradient and its curves have been engineered at enormous expense—and it has no use whatever in summer. At its hairpin bends it is banked like the Brooklands track. Some of these banks, occurring on the lip of a steep declivity, are shored up with masonry and are as high as a house. When the first snow falls, gangs of men hammer it down and coat it on the banks—all of which are subsequently iced with water. The making of a first-class toboggan run involves an amount of labour and money which is little guessed at by its merry users; and, of course, the safety foot-bridges which cross it have to be kept in repair.

Capital Levy and Catholics.

An interesting analysis of the voting on the Capital Levy is contained in the *Tablet* (Dec. 16), which points out that in the distinctly Catholic cantons the measure was rejected by a majority of 21 to 1, whilst the figures for the whole country