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HOME NEWS

Negotiations for simplifying the passport formalities are proceeding between the French and Swiss Governments.

The French Government favours total abolition of visas and is preparing proposals in that sense for submission to the Federal Government.

* * *

Ex-Federal Councillor F. Calonder, appointed High Commissioner by the League of Nations to settle German-Polish differences arising out of the League of Nations decision regarding the new frontier lines, has left Kattowitz for Oppeln, where he will consult with the three inter-Allied representatives. During his stay there he will also inspect several Upper Silesian industrial concerns, after which tour of inspection M. Calonder will proceed to Warsaw and Berlin, to confer with the respective Governments.

* * *

The Sixth Swiss Industries Fair will be held in Basle from April 22nd to May 2nd, 1922. The progress of the Fair since it was reorganised in 1917 is illustrated by the fact that in the latter year there were 831 exhibitors occupying an area of 65,000 square feet, while in 1921 the exhibitors numbered 1,054, necessitating an increase of available space to 220,000 square feet.

* * *

As a result of an agreement between the French and the Swiss Postal authorities, letters from Switzerland to Great Britain can now be despatched by Air Mail. The service is daily, Sundays excepted. Ordinary and registered letters destined for this service must be marked: "Air Mail Paris-London" and must have Swiss postage stamps affixed to cover the ordinary letter rate fee, added to which will be a surcharge of 25 centimes for every 20 grammes or fraction thereof. The maximum weight accepted will be 450 grammes per letter or postal package conforming to letter rate regulations. Contents such as money or valuables will not be accepted for air mail transit.

* * *

The Federal Post are issuing new booklets of stamps at 4 francs each, containing 5 stamps of 5 centimes, 13 of 10, and 12 at 20; a charge of 5 centimes is therefore made for this convenience; whereas the British Post Office exacts no charge for its stamp booklets, presumably covering production costs by revenue from advertisements which appear on the booklet covers and interleaved between the stamps.

The Swiss National Bank is offering prizes totalling 15,000 francs for new designs for fifty-franc notes. The competition is open to all artists and industrial art designers of Swiss nationality at home and abroad. Full particulars of the conditions governing the competition may be obtained from Department II of the Swiss National Bank in Berne, or in foreign countries from the respective Swiss Legations or Consulates. Sketches have to be submitted direct to the National Bank in Berne by March 31st, 1922, latest.

* * *

Following an old custom, the Municipal Council of Zurich addresses every New Year's Eve letters of congratulations, accompanied by monetary gifts, to the oldest citizens resident in the city.

This year's recipients were: Konrad Suhr (92) and Anna Barbara Kollhop-Brandenberger, who was born in August, 1822.

* * *

The Federal Assay Office gives the following returns for hall-marking gold, silver, and platinum articles during the past year.

A comparison with the figures in parentheses, which are those for the preceding year, emphasizes graphically the severe drop of trade in these industries:—

Gold watch cases, 356,409 (1,005,437).

Silver watch cases, 611,308 (1,359,605).

Platinum watch cases, 4,036 (5,861).

Gold, silver, and platinum plate and articles of jewellery, 888,364 (1,724,414).

* * *

The universal economic crisis also acutely affects the exports of Swiss cheese. In 1913 the total output reached 80 million kilos, of which 45 million kilos were absorbed for home consumption, while the rest was exported, realising about 70 million francs. Germany and Austria, before the war, imported nearly 15 million kilos, but are to-day out of question as consumers owing to the hopeless exchange conditions prevailing in those countries, while France, whose imports in 1913 totalled seven million kilos, is also only in the market for quite a negligible quantity. Exports to America, which in the same year accounted for 9 million kilos, have also fallen very considerably, and several other countries, which between them imported nearly 10 million kilos, can to-day not be counted on, unless the disparity in the exchange is to some extent counterbalanced by a reduction in the price for the Swiss commodity—the only means of reviving exports and improving the otherwise gloomy outlook in the Swiss industry of milk products for 1922.

* * *

Exchange Incongruities! A Swiss traveller returning by the Viennese Express indulged in a bottle of wine during his sojourn in the dining car, for which luxury he paid 500 kronen. Having alighted at the Swiss frontier station St. Margarethen, he promptly sold the empty bottle