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HOME NEWS

The Swiss National Council and the Swiss Council of States are entering upon ordinary session at Berne on Monday, January 23rd.

* * *

At the next general elections the members' roll of the National Council will be increased by nine seats as a result of the increase of the Swiss population as revealed by the last census. The following seven Cantons can claim additional seats:—

Berne ...	...	2, new total	34 seats.
Zurich ...	...	2, "	27 "
Geneva ...	...	1, "	9 "
Lucerne ...	...	1, "	9 "
Solothurn ...	...	1, "	7 "
Schaffhausen ...	...	1, "	3 "
Zug ...	...	1, "	2 "

* * *

The total expenditure involved by the Swiss Mobilisation since the outbreak of the war, according to the final accounts, reaches a total of just on 1,200 million francs.

* * *

It is anticipated that the Swiss Federal Council will nominate three delegates to represent Switzerland at the forthcoming Conference at Genoa.

* * *

The Federal Department for Public Economics has, on request, granted permission to Bally's Boot Factory to temporarily increase the weekly working hours from 48 to 52. Foreign orders, which during the better part of 1921 were totally absent, are beginning to come in again, occasioning a steady increase of output for some time ahead in this important factory.

* * *

Crisis in the Swiss Tobacco Industry.—The Manifattura Luganese Tabachi, employing 80 hands, have been compelled to close down their works. Vautier Frères, of Grandson, are also forced to dismiss a considerable number of their staff.

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A contingent of 125 American troops from the army of occupation on the Rhine passed through Bâle, Olten, Chiasso, on Monday last, on their way to Rome, where they will take part in the burial ceremony of Italy's "Unknown Warrior."

According to the *Neue Berner Zeitung* the administrative council of the Swiss National Bank has decided to recommend the increase of the bank director's salary from 35,000 to 40,000 francs—a proposal against which the representatives of agriculture on the bank's council lodged a protest.

* * *

Forty French doctors have arrived at Leysin for the purpose of attending lectures by Dr. Rollier and his collaborators on helio-therapeutics.

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A second instalment, amounting to 34 million francs, of the credits voted for the relief of unemployment has been apportioned to the various Cantons by the Federal Council.

* * *

An avalanche which swept into the Vorderrhein Valley near Brigels (Grisons) carried away in its course of destruction a small shed sheltering three head of cattle and a young lad who tended them. Two other men, who were also caught by the avalanche, managed to extricate themselves, but the lad and the animals perished under the masses of snow.

* * *

The navigation on the Rhine between Strasbourg and Bâle, which had been suspended for some time past owing to the low water level, is now suffering from the other extreme of too much water.

In the night from Monday to Tuesday last, as a consequence of the torrential falls of rain which followed immediately upon copious deposits of snow all over Switzerland, the river rose at Bâle from 50 centimetres to 3 metres. When this abnormally high water level is reached at Bâle, navigation is rendered impossible, as the boats cannot pass under the bridge at Kehl.

* * *

The Committee of Swiss Artists, appointed by the Federal Council to examine and judge the 542 designs which have been submitted for the new Swiss five-franc piece, have selected six of these for an award of 500 francs each. The successful competitors were:—

René Dubloz, Geneva;
Alfred Girardclos, Chaux-de-Fonds;
Giovanni Bianchi, Coire;
Paul Wilde, Bâle;
Julius Schwyzer, Zurich;
Paul Bourcart, Munich.

Most of the successful designs symbolise the ear of corn or a hand raised as for taking the oath. Eleven consolation prizes of 150 francs each have also been awarded by the jury.

The 542 models, which have been executed in plaster or clay, are on exhibition in the Federal Palace and attract a large number of visitors.

The total turnover of the Swiss Postscheckkonto for 1921 amounts to 17.8 milliards of francs.

From 33,745 in 1920 the number of accounts opened has been increased to 42,740 during 1921.

The stamp duties on shares, debentures and other securities realised 20,480,000 francs for 1921, against 21,665,000 francs in 1920.

* * *

The Bâle municipal budget for 1922 anticipates receipts of 37,838,927 francs and an expenditure of 44,368,793 frs., causing a probable deficit of 6,529,866 francs.

* * *

The Vevey correspondent of the *Daily Mail* reports that a mild sensation has been caused in certain towns of German Switzerland by the appearance of what looked like a miniature Noah's Ark on wheels.

Having acquired a small property in Alsace, a farmer dismantled his chalet and reconstructed it on a huge motor-lorry. When all his furniture and poultry had been installed, the farmer and his wife and four children moved into the front room. A stable at the back was occupied by a horse and cow, who gazed complacently out while the farmstead rumbled along in easy stages towards the new home.

* * *

Last Monday, at Interlaken, Dr. Jacot-Guillarmot gave a lecture on his journey through India and the Himalayas. As is well known, Dr. Jacot-Guillarmot is the only Swiss who has successfully climbed the Chogari and the Kanschinjunga, which, next to Mount Everest, are the highest points on earth.

NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The abundant fall of snow at all the Alpine resorts—accompanied by some rain in the lower regions—has been termed “the most acceptable New Year's gift which Switzerland could have had.” It is not only the hotel industry which will derive considerable benefit, but the country in general will be very much relieved on account of an increased water supply for domestic, agricultural and electricity generation purposes. The drought during 1921 has been a most serious one, the water-level on most of the rivers not having been so low for several centuries; the amount of atmospheric precipitation is best illustrated by the fact that at Basle the Rhine registered on the 9th inst. a rise of no less than six feet. Adverse conditions still prevail, however, on the southern slopes of the Alps, the shortage of water seriously interfering with the economic life in the Ticino, where numerous forest fires are spreading, some pine and chestnut woods having already been destroyed.

* * *

Another fascinating contribution from the pen of Sir John Foster Fraser on “Life in St. Moritz” is published by *The Evening Standard* (Jan. 16th). “For those who ‘are less strenuous in their winter sportsmanship there are ‘many things to be done besides sitting in the sun and ‘watching beautiful Continental skating.’ If you cannot actively participate in sports you may with some satisfaction follow the exertions of those who endeavour to amuse themselves in this direction like—

“The stout lady who has come from London equipped with

every requisite of the ski-runner. She has a yellow jersey, a green cap, tobacco-hued expansive knickerbockers, putties, the correct boots. As the gliders are strapped to her feet she exclaims she ‘never will be able to do it.’ She is right. She gives a little scream, a lurch forward, and then she flops in undignified confusion. With ski twisted she lies in a locked position and shouts for someone to come and take the wretched things off. There is lots of fun at the misfortunes of other folk. . . .”

People are leaving only to make room for others:—

“... The Lord Chancellor and his viscountess and the three little Honourable Smiths have gone home, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland have gone to Paris, but there are still a few celebrities amongst the two thousand holiday makers in the village. . . . There is the Principessa Odescalchi, Lady Nunburnholme, the Comte de Rougemont, the Marquis de Casa Calderon, the famous film star ‘Pola Negri,’ the Maharajah and Maharanee of Porbandar, Lady Ribblesdale, Sir Hall Caine, Sir Arthur and Lady Crosfield. . . .”

* * *

A motor tour “Over the Simplon Pass” is described in the January number of *The Badminton Magazine*. Starting from the Lago Maggiore, the episodes of the journey and the picturesque villages on the route are the subjects of a delightful article and original photographs. We cull the following about the village of Simplon and the St. Bernard's Pass:—

“We slowed down to pass through the little village of Simplon, rebuilt after the great landslip of the sixteenth century, but scarcely was its square church tower hidden from our eyes before we came upon a vast space piled up with rocks in the wildest and most indescribable confusion. Once there had stood here a tiny village, built on the gentle slope of the smiling pastureland beneath the shadow of the mighty peaks. But one cold March day in 1901, at which time the inhabitants were fortunately residing at a lower altitude for the winter, the great Rossboden Glacier burst, and millions of tons of gigantic rocks were hurled upon the sleeping village. Thirty feet below the newly-constructed road the little hamlet lies buried to-day, the glacier, an icy green mass clinging to a cleft in the mountains, still gazes down upon the utter desolation which it has wrought, while thousands and thousands of jagged crags lay strewn in the valley below. It is just as if the giants had waged a Titanic battle or the gods had rained rocks upon the earth; and one trembles as one thinks of what the scene must have been like when the overpowering onrush of displaced débris came hurtling like a fury down the side of the mountain, carrying destruction and obliteration in its train.

The scenery became rather more rugged in character as, climbing gradually by the gently rising road, we attained nearer unto the summit of the pass. On our left, standing in the midst of a wild and rocky plateau which lay nestling at the foot of a gigantic mass of snow-clad mountain, we could see the little square building with its belfry tower which was once occupied by the Augustine Brothers of St. Bernard. Lonely and forsaken it stands amidst the mountains, a romantic memory indeed. For what visions it calls up of cold winter nights upon the pass, when the snow fell heavily, forming into gigantic drifts, and the icy winds born of the eternal glacial snows swept down through the hidden crevices of the mountains. Then it was that the good monks of St. Bernard went forth, their dogs running on before them, and many a traveller exhausted through battling against the fury of the elements was found and brought in to the warm fire of the Hospice, to be sheltered from the biting cold. But of the many who perished before the Brothers could reach them little was known until the summer sun had melted away the snow which lay thick over the Pass and exposed their poor whitened bones.

Even as far back as the beginning of the fourteenth century the Knights of Malta had erected a hospice for wayfarers on the Simplon summit, for there was a track across the Simplon in Roman times, while in 1250, in a contract drawn up between the Bishop of Sion and a great business firm in Milan we find the following passage:—“With a view to employing that path across the Simplon, which, since the Roman era, has fallen into disuse.” By 1650 the original hospice had become but a pile of ruins, and it was then that Kaspar Stockalper built that tower which served as a residence for himself and his family during the summer months and a refuge for travellers all the year through, they being lodged free of charge in the basement.