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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The President of the Swiss Confederation has received the following telegram, handed in at Basle, from the King of Belgium:—

“ En quittant le sol de la Suisse, je tiens a renouveler l'expression de ma sympathie pour votre pays, et à vous remercier pour les attentions dont j'ai été l'objet au cours de mes deux passages rapides sur le territoire de la Confédération.”

\* \* \*

The results of the Zurich Municipal elections, which took place on Sunday, April 2nd, are hailed with satisfaction.

The Communists have been unshipped from the Town Council, and the attempt of the Socialists to gain a majority on the Grand Town Council has been frustrated. The Bourgeois parties now hold the majority with 63 seats, while during the last legislative period the Grütlianner, Socialists and Communists, who constituted the left wing, held 68 seats against 62 to-day.

\* \* \*

To the Canton of Berne belongs the pride of embracing the three communities which extract higher income taxes than any other Swiss community. These are: Berne, the Capital, Bienne, and Thoune. Whether the taxpayers are anxious to retain the place of pride is not stated in the report.

\* \* \*

The Russian Soviet Mission for Genoa, which had asked for and received permission from the Federal Council to cross Swiss territory, has not set foot on Swiss soil, but proceeded to Italy via Tyrol and the Brenner route.

\* \* \*

Dr. Hans Hecht, Professor of English at the Basle University, has accepted a call by the University of Goettingen in the same capacity.

\* \* \*

Worried by constant misfortune in his stables, Josef Stocker from Sins (Aargau) left his farm and wandered about the country for four days without food. Utterly exhausted, he dropped on the bank of the River Aare, near Klingnau, and died during the frosty night from exposure. Stocker owned one of the largest farms in the Aargovien Oberfreiamt, and leaves seven children under age.

The Swiss aviation officer Mittelholzer, who only recently accomplished a successful flight from Rotterdam to Zurich, proceeded to Varese (Italy) last week to take delivery of a new Henriot aeroplane, which has been purchased by the Ad Astra Co., of Zurich.

Mittelholzer started with the new machine on Wednesday morning, March 23rd, from Varese; crossing the Tessin at an altitude of some 18,000 feet in perfect weather, he made for the Grisons, where, however, the weather conditions suddenly changed, inducing the aviator to alter his course towards the Glarner Alps, but he was soon enveloped in dense clouds of fog. After a little while these lifted suddenly, and to his terror the aviator discovered that his machine was fast descending towards a great black wall of rock. To avoid a fatal smash, Mittelholzer instantly pulled the machine round to the left and landed unhurt but shaken on a small bank of snow-covered rock between the Foo and the Riseten Pass, 8,000 feet up.

Although the aeroplane had sustained no damage, it was impossible to restart from here. Mittelholzer being an experienced alpinist, however, also realised that he would be courting death a second time if he delayed immediate descent to the valley on foot. He was less fortunate in this endeavour. Soon after starting on the descent he slipped and fell down a couloir, injuring his head and badly smashing one of his knees, which made progress not only painful, but also very slow. Towards evening of the same day (Wednesday) Mittelholzer reached a hut on the Riesetenalp, where he stayed overnight. Early on Thursday morning he resumed his downward journey, the injury to his knee and the deep snow impeding advance greatly, but being neither shod nor clad for a journey under such conditions, and as he could now only hope to find shelter down in the valley, he had to keep on the move so as to avoid succumbing to exposure. At 2 o'clock on Friday morning, over 30 hours after he had started from the Risalp hut, he at last reached the village of Matt, completely exhausted.

Careful nursing and medical attention are now gradually restoring the strength of the plucky alpine aviator, to the great relief of his friends and his many admirers.

\* \* \*

## LES AVENTURES DE SUISSES EN AMERIQUE.

Il semble que les histoires de chercheurs d'or et d'attaques d'Indiens, qui ont enchanté notre enfance, sont des légendes d'un temps fabuleux et disparu. Or, on vient d'enterrer à Locarno, en présence de représentants du gouvernement du Tessin, un Tessinois qui a vécu cette vie mouvementée des déserts américains.

Le héros de ces aventures est M. Jean Pedrazzini, de Locarno. Jeune homme, après avoir été au lycée, il entra aux Forges d'Undervelier, dans le Jura bernois, dirigées

par un de ses oncles. Il s'y forma à la carrière commerciale et y apprit le français et l'allemand. En 1875, Jean Pedrazzini rentra au Tessin. A cette époque, les jeunes Tessinois de toute condition émigraient volontiers au delà des mers pour y faire fortune. Jean Pedrazzini fit comme les autres et partit pour l'Amérique. Il débarqua aux Etats-Unis et il se mit à les parcourir presque en entier, à la recherche d'une occupation qui lui convînt.

Finalement, son humeur voyageuse le mena au Mexique, dans l'Etat de la Sonora, où il apprit que, au sein des hautes montagnes de cette région, il y avait des mines de métaux précieux, qui, après avoir été exploitées, avaient été abandonnées. D'après les lois du pays, on pouvait obtenir facilement la concession de ces mines. Jean Pedrazzini s'empressa de s'y rendre, accompagné d'un petit nombre d'ouvriers italiens qu'il venait de rencontrer. A cette époque-là, il n'y avait presque pas de routes dans ce pays, de sorte que les hardis émigrants durent marcher de longues semaines dans les lits des rivières et des torrents desséchés. Arrivés à destination, ils se trouvèrent dans un grand désert pierreux, sans la moindre végétation et sans eau. Ils se mirent à l'œuvre, M. Jean Pedrazzini travaillait de la pioche et de la pelle comme ses compagnons. Au bout de quelques semaines, ils purent pénétrer dans les mines et y retrouvèrent d'abondants filons d'argent. Mais quelle vie fut celle de ces braves, au milieu de cette solitude, hantée par les jaguars et les serpents. Des tribus d'Apaches, habitant l'autre versant des montagnes, dès qu'elles s'aperçurent que l'endroit était de nouveau habité, ne tardèrent pas à y faire des incursions menaçantes pour les hôtes de ce désert, qui durent défendre leur vie contre les Peaux-Rouges, et parfois subir de vrais sièges dans les carrières et les mines.

Au fur et à mesure que le minerai extrait augmentait, M. Pedrazzini allait embaucher de nouveaux mineurs pour l'aider dans une besogne qui devenait chaque jour plus accablante. Ensuite, il fallut songer à transporter le précieux minerai là où l'on pourrait le travailler et le vendre. Ce ne fut pas petite affaire. Au surplus, M. Pedrazzini, devenu chef de colonie, dut pourvoir à la subsistance de ses ouvriers et de leurs familles, faire venir un médecin, un maître d'école, un prêtre. Il se fit éleveur, de bétail, agriculteur, planteur: toute une région fut boisée par lui. En même temps, il eut à s'occuper de la police de la colonie, qui lui avait été confiée par le gouvernement.

Un beau jour, ce ne fut pas seulement de l'argent que l'on trouva dans les placers, mais de l'or. De cette façon, Dieu aidant, en moins d'une vingtaine d'années, M. Pedrazzini vit sa fortune s'élever et devenir considérable. Entre temps, il s'était marié avec une Mexicaine et il vit grandir autour de lui une belle famille.

Il y a une vingtaine d'années, M. Pedrazzini se décida à revenir en Europe et à s'établir à Locarno, sa ville natale, en vue de l'éducation de ses enfants. Il ne renonça pas pour autant au travail. Il continua à diriger ses mines du Mexique et s'intéressa à toutes les œuvres et entreprises d'utilité publique tessinoises. Pendant plusieurs années, il fut président de la Banque suisse-américaine, membre du conseil d'administration des chemins de fer régionaux, du funiculaire de la Madonna des Sasso, des entreprises électriques et des tramways de Locarno, etc. Il acheta beaucoup de terrain et y bâtit des maisons et des villas.

Il est mort à Monaco, et sa dépouille mortelle est arrivée à Locarno. Les funérailles ont été grandioses. Au cimetière, l'éloge funèbre du défunt a été prononcé par M. Cattori, président du Conseil d'Etat, par le maire de Locarno, M. Rusca.

From the "Feuille d'Avis des Montagnes," March 28th, 1922.

## NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The abolition of the Swiss visa on British passports has afforded the English press an opportunity of protesting against the retention of this impediment to travel by Great Britain. The one-sided action of the Swiss Government—without a quid pro quo—is much appreciated and will perhaps induce the authorities in this country to return the compliment.

\* \* \*

The *Daily News* (March 30th) pays a tribute to the President of the Germano-Polish Mixed Commission, M. Felix Calonder, who is about to give his decision on the one question which could not be settled by mutual consent: the liquidation of German property in the zone now transferred to Poland:—

"That this should be the single issue left outstanding is remarkable, for it means that on every other of the problems, on which no fewer than 11 sub-commissions have been working, an agreement by consent has been arrived at. That is a striking testimony both to the general practicability of the original decision of the League of Nations Council and to the spirit manifested by three principal negotiators, M. Calonder, the neutral (Swiss) chairman, Dr. Schiffer, the German representative, and M. Olszowski, the Polish."

\* \* \*

The Geneva correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* (March 27th), who always likes to refer to the Swiss Railways as a lesson in nationalisation, says, in concluding his exhortation, that "one of the great difficulties is that Swiss Railways are admittedly so very much under political influence, and there is so much political jobbery connected with them."

\* \* \*

"The Swiss Farmer's Plight" receives sympathetic consideration in an article in *The Times* (March 31st), which states that—

"The low exchange of agricultural countries such as France and Italy has created a very serious situation for Swiss agriculture, which cannot export its products and finds it difficult even to sell them in Switzerland, where French and Italian vegetables and fruits are cheaper than the home-grown products. In spite of the Customs duties a kilogram of French potatoes is  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. cheaper than the Swiss.

The Swiss peasant has become rich during the war, and a peasant driving his motor-car is not an unusual sight. The closing of the frontiers has enabled him to maintain high prices, but now foreign competition is forcing the peasants to lower their prices. But the present difficulty arises from the fact that prices should be much lower than they are and that the peasants would be compelled to undersell their products.

The Swiss peasant is heavily taxed, and he is handicapped by the high cost of production resulting from the high wages of landworkers, who earn from 6s. to 8s. a day, from the high transport taxes and from foreign competition. In normal times the peasants could make a profit with the export of cheese to the neighbouring countries and from the sale of their milk to the chocolate and condensed milk industries. But at present cheese cannot be exported on account of the high value of the Swiss franc, and there is a glut of milk in the country on account of the closing of many condensed milk factories and of the stagnation of the chocolate industry.

At a recent assembly of the Swiss Association of Land producers it was decided to urge the Federal Government to reduce the banking interest, to reduce the taxes, to lower the transport rates, and to consider what measures should be taken to protect home agriculture. The peasants are not in favour of drastic import restrictions, but they ask for an increase of Customs duties. They are ready to reduce their prices, but they refuse to lose money.

Since the end of last year many reductions have been registered in the prices of land products, and others are anticipated. The price of milk has decreased by 2d. per gallon, the pound of butter is 9d. cheaper, the kilogram of Gruyère cheese costs 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. less. The Federal Government will do its