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HOME NEWS

Next Sunday our people will be called upon to vote on a new liquor bill, that is to say, a revision, according to modern requirements, of Art. 32bis of our Constitution, passed in 1885 and creating an alcohol monopoly. This new measure has two distinct purposes in view: in the first instance it is intended to restrict the manufacture and consumption of cheap liquor (Schnaps), and secondly it is hoped, by increased taxation, to collect the necessary funds to place the proposed old-age and invalidity insurance on a sound basis. In future, distilling can only be done under a licence, and the farmers are not allowed to dispose of their liquor to local innkeepers; the sale will be a monopoly of the State. At present the liquor tax in Switzerland is somewhat low (about Frs. 6.— per head) compared with other countries (England Frs. 50, France Frs. 40), so that there is a considerable margin for an increase of revenue in this respect. It is anticipated that about 25 million francs will be so collected annually, of which 10 millions are the share of the Confederation, and 15 millions go to the Cantons unconditionally, with the exception of 15 per cent., which are to be earmarked for fighting alcoholism and its causes. For the same purpose the Confederation will allot 5 per cent., and the bulk of the 10 million will be used towards financing the new scheme of old-age and invalidity insurance, which has been stated to require about 30 million francs per annum. The acceptance of this new bill is a foregone conclusion, as all the political parties and practically the whole of the press are strongly supporting it.

The Times message, according to which reprisals have been carried out in Russia in connection with the Lausanne murder, is now officially contradicted by the Soviet authorities.

Col. Sonderegger, Chief of Staff of the Swiss Army, has tendered his resignation; the latter is said to be due to certain differences of opinion in high military circles. Born in 1868 (in Appenzell), and though not a soldier by profession, Colonel Sonderegger has behind him a distinguished military career and is responsible for several new departures in the modern training of the Swiss army.

The wood-turning factory Schenkel & Co. in Sihlbrugg, near Horgen, was totally destroyed by fire last Sunday morning, the damage being estimated in the neighbourhood of Frs. 200,000.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Merkwürdige Luftspiegelung in den Alpen.—Zwei britische Touristen nahmen bei einer Besteigung des Finsteraarhorns am 2. Mai eine eigentümliche Luftspiegelung wahr. Der Horizont war ungewöhnlich klar; sie sahen im Norden den Schwarzwald, im Süden die Alpenriesen, vom Mont Blanc bis zum Monte Rosa usw. Plötzlich, um 11 Uhr 55, tauchte östlich vom Eiger das Bild eines Schiffes im klaren Mittelsblau auf. Die Erscheinung währte ungefähr eine Minute lang. Einige Augenblicke später erschien weiter östlich eine Linie von fünf Schiffen; die Schloten und Masten hoben sich deutlich ab. Diese zweite Erscheinung dauerte etwa 15 Minuten und war bald mehr, bald weniger deutlich. Die Schiffe erschienen stark vergrössert und in normaler Lage, nicht umgekehrt, in der Richtung Finsteraarhorn nach Grindelwald. Verlängert man diese Linie auf dem Atlas, so trifft sie als erstes Meer den östlichen Ausgang des Aarmelkanals nach der Nordsee. Die Entfernung beträgt etwa 640 Kilometer. Einer der Touristen, Oberleutnant Neame, erklärt in einer Zeitschrift an die "Times," jede Verwechslung, etwa mit einem Wolkenbild, für völlig unmöglich. (Bund.)

Les accidents de chemins de fer.—Les accidents de chemins de fer occasionnant la mort de passagers ou de tierces personnes ont été particulièrement nombreux ces derniers temps. Durant une année, 25 accidents de ce genre ont été enregistrés. L'accident de la Gürbetalbahn à Wabern n'est pas compris dans ce chiffre ni les accidents survenus au personnel. Dix de ces accidents avec issue mortelle sont dus à des tramways régionaux,

huit à des tramways locaux et sept à des chemins de fer ayant une voie indépendante. En répartissant ces accidents d'après leurs causes, on obtient les chiffres suivants: huit cas mortels à la suite de présence imprudente sur la voie au moment du passage de trains; cinq personnes se tuèrent en prenant ou quittant des voitures en marche; cinq personnes furent écrasées sur des passages sur voies; enfin sept accidents mortels pour causes diverses. Le nombre des accidents causés par l'imprudence de la victime est donc de beaucoup supérieur à celui des accidents survenus par la faute du personnel ou de la compagnie. (La Tribune de Genève.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Swiss Sports.

I remember "Dagonet" edifying his readers of "Mustard and Cress" with minute descriptions of his own bodily failings, but, as I dare not believe that my readers take so much personal interest in "Kyburg," I will spare them the details of the cause which prevented me, much against my wishes, from attending at Herne Hill. I had intended to write about these Sports this week. I had even gathered a few rather good and appropriate jokes with which I wanted to illuminate my notes, but, alas! it cannot be. You, dear reader, you will have to look to another column if you wish to read of the splendid Sports Meeting which took place last Saturday, and which, I hear, was a complete success.

Alcohol.

Having read the extract from the *Journal de Genève* in our last issue—I generally read the *S.O.* on Saturday evening at *apéritif* time, and even my indisposition was not quite bad enough to prevent me from indulging in my favourite glass of something stronger than water—I rose, went to look at myself in the mirror, and, to my horror, discovered that my face really was rather reddish! So I read that article once again, more carefully, and after mature reflection I have decided that if I were at home next Sunday, my vote would be in support of the proposed new Bill. Not that the statistics frighten me, because I know very well that a large portion of the alcohol consumed in Switzerland is imbibed in the form of our light wines and wholesome beers, and the consumption of distilled spirits is confined largely to a small percentage of the population. But, as in the case of the Absinthe prohibition, years ago, it seems that the whole population must make a sacrifice in order to help a minority which is too weak to help itself. "Un pour tous, tous pour un." It is not a question of curtailing liberty either, because in a real democracy individual liberty has to give way very often, and rightly so, to the liberty of the community, i.e., to the freeing of the community from threatening dangers. This seems to be the case in this connection, and I, therefore, hope that the new Bill will be accepted.

An Interesting Pilgrimage.

I take the following from the *Christian* (May 17th):—

To plan for a fitting reception of the pilgrimage to European Protestant countries which is being organised by the Huguenot-Wallon Tercentenary Committee, instituted by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, the Swiss Protestant Federation has formed a national committee, under the chairmanship of Dean Herold, the President of the Federation. This national committee has already sketched out a programme for visits to Geneva and Zurich, including a reception in the hall where the League of Nations meets, and divine service at the Auditoire, where Calvin lectured and Knox preached. In Zurich the party will visit the Cathedral, Zwingli's church and house, and other places of interest. The pilgrims from America are to start their itinerary on July 18 next at Paris, whence they go direct to La Rochelle; on August 11 and 12 they are to be at Geneva; August 17 and 18 at Strasbourg; August 20 and 21 at Verdun; and from August 31 to September 5 at Amsterdam, Leyden and The Hague. Word has come from France that official receptions to the pilgrims are being prepared in the principal cities, and a national reception committee has been appointed, including many distinguished French Protestants. A Belgian Tercentenary Committee has been formed, and in Italy the preparations are in the hands of the officials of the Waldensian Tavola. The Leyden Pilgrim Fathers Society will arrange the programme in Holland. The American Congress has passed a measure, authorizing the striking of a commemorative half-dollar in honour of the three hundredth anniversary of the coming of the first Huguenots and Wallons to America in 1624.

Having the good fortune of knowing Dean Herold personally—"Kyburg" was baptised and confirmed by this venerable Father of the Swiss Protestant Church—I am quite sure that the arrangements for this forthcoming Pilgrimage could not



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be in better hands, and that the distinguished visitors will not only find in Dean Herold a wonderfully wise guide in matters of historical interest, but will also have the pleasure of making the acquaintance of an extremely lovable, kind and wise gentleman of our Protestant Church. Dean Herold spent a year or so in London, in the 'seventies, and to hear him talk of that time, as "Kyburg" had the privilege of doing quite recently, is to learn the gigantic progress London has made since then, especially as regards building, sanitation, etc.

"Opium Dump."

Under this heading the *Daily Express* (May 23) publishes the following from its Geneva correspondent:—

Switzerland may wreck the world convention for the control of opium.

The fifth session of the Opium Commission opens here on Thursday, and important decisions on the traffic in opium, morphine, cocaine, and other drugs are expected. Three countries have so far refused to sign the convention—Turkey, Greece and Switzerland. Switzerland's reasons are that she is not an opium-producing country, and that there are no smokers or eaters of opium in Switzerland.

Canada and Australia officially complained to the League recently that large quantities of cocaine and morphine were being sent into those countries by Swiss firms. The Swiss are making large profits, and Switzerland has become a dumping ground for the trade.

It seems to me that the whole question requires some official elucidation. Similar accusations have been made against Switzerland lately, even in the House of Commons. I am not sufficiently informed on the question to form an opinion as to whether the whole matter is, perhaps, a mere "stunt," i.e., whether, perhaps, the evils of drug-taking are painted too luridly, and I, for one, would welcome an official statement from our Swiss authorities, who seem to be especially involved. What says our Legation?

Walking Tours in Switzerland.

The *Sphere* (May 19) and the *Blackburn Times* (of the same date) publish illustrated articles, the one dealing more with the Bernese Oberland, the other with the Gotthard region. Both articles are well worth reading and full of useful tips, even for Swiss who think that they know their country. Another article in the same issue of the *Sphere*, also beautifully illustrated, described "Springtime in the Alps," dealing chiefly with the Valais, especially Zermatt.

Rhine Regularisation at Diepoldsau.

Engineering (May 18th):—

One of the last stages of the regularisation of the Rhine between the Canton of St. Gallen, on the left bank, and Austria on the right, part of the great scheme which was adopted nearly thirty years ago, was commenced last month by blowing up the temporary dam at Diepoldsau, erected to separate the old bed of the Rhine from the new bed excavated to lower level, into which the river was deflected. The dam had a length of about 600 m., and at the crown a width of about 8 m. Hollow square piles, about 15 cm. (6 in.) side length, were driven down into the dam to a depth of 2.5 m. (8 ft) below the level of the Rhine bed, there being three of these piles in each of the nine rows across the dam. At the bottom of a pile a charge of up to 16 kg. of trotyl was placed, this explosive being