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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 Schlotte 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 Zurschrift 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

selected because it is little affected by moisture: the holes were tamped with damp sand. All the 29 mines were exploded (by electricity) at the same moment. Though the tamping proved sufficiently strong to break up the mattresses of brush wood which had been placed on the river side of the dam, the Rhine level had sunk by 0.75 m. (2 ft. 6 in.) within the three days that elapsed between the laying of the mines and the explosion, and the rush of the water through the gaps created by the explosion was not so powerful as had been expected. But the Rhine will itself soon finish the work. A strong dam had been erected, because sudden thaws in the mountains and Rhine floods had always been feared.

How many of my readers remember the poem we had to learn in the long ago, and which dealt with the "Rheinüberschwemmung" which had the Diepoldsau district for a background?

Swiss-Indian.

The Spectator (May 19th):—The death of Colonel John Henry Rivett-Carnac at Vevey on Friday, May 11th, is a matter of especial regret to readers of the "Spectator," who will remember the many letters from him that we have published. In accordance with the family tradition of the Rivetts he spent most of his life in India, where he had a very distinguished career, in both civil and military capacities. In addition to his public life in the Indian Civil Service, he had many private hobbies of a more purely intellectual nature, in any of which he would have obtained eminence had it held his somewhat over-ventured attention for longer than a few years at a time. One of the practical results of his interest in archaeology is the possession of several valuable coins by the British Museum, a gift from him. The latter part of his life, practically since his retirement, he spent in Switzerland, where he did valuable work during the War for British prisoners. His death has deprived us of one of those all too rare combinations of personal charm and practical ability.

The New Swiss Five-Franc Pieces.

The Times Trade and Engineering Supplement of May 19th publishes a number of pictures which appeared originally in the *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung*, Zofingen, showing various stages in the manufacture of these new five-franc pieces. They are being minted at Berne and are of the same quality as the old coins (900 fine, 25 grammes). Reaching Basle one morning, some weeks ago, I was given in exchange one of these new pieces, and, at first, would not take it, thinking it was one of the "Schaubuden-Medaillen" of the Basler Messe! It took me some time to grasp the fact that this ugly coin could be our new five-franc piece. Why we cannot have a better coin I do not know. The picture of Mother Helvetia was conventional, but at least not ugly. Then we had various beautiful heads on various medals issued at rifle festivals. Why not choose one from among those? I suppose some modern influence was at work and decreed that our taste wanted modernising. Perhaps, also, our authorities acted upon the old slogan, "*ars est celare artem*." If so, they have certainly succeeded amazingly well, because these new five-franc pieces assuredly do "hide their artistic merit." At the same time, any reader who, having read the above, is thoroughly disgusted with the look of these coins he has hoarded up and wants to get rid of them, please communicate with the Editor, who has instructions to forward all such incoming coins to "Kyburg" for disposal.

Electrical Developments in Switzerland.

Electrician (May 18th):—The Commercial Secretary to H.M. Legation at Berne, Mr. E. C. D. Rawlins, in his report on the economic and financial conditions in Switzerland, states that the electrification of the Federal railway system is proceeding in accordance with the programme established in 1918, which provides for the electrification of the whole system within a period of thirty years. During last year 357 km. of railways were electrified and in operation. The lines so operating are Iselle-Brigue (22 km.), Brigue-Sion (53 km.), Berne-Scherzlingen (34 km.), Chiasso-Lucerne (25 km.), Arth-Goldau-Zong (16 km.), and Immensee-Kothkreuz (7 km.), whilst electrification work is in hand on the following lines:—Lucerne-Zurich (55 km.), Lucerne-Basle (92 km.), and Sion-Lausanne (92 km.). It is anticipated that in the near future electrification work will also be undertaken in connection with the Zurich-Olten-Berne (130 km.), Thalwil-Richterswil (27 km.), Lausanne-Dailles-Vallorbe and Dailles-Yverdon lines. In 1924 approximately 536 km. of railway will be operated electrically, representing 20.9 per cent. of the total length of the Swiss Federal railway system (2,543 km.).

With regard to private railways, there have been no new extensions, with the exception of the Rhetian Railways (Canton Grisons), who have completed the electrification of their whole system by the opening of the electrically operated Reichenau-Disentis line (49 km.). The cost of the electrification of the 277 km. of line operated by this company is estimated at approximately 120 million francs.

Commenting on the Swiss electrical industry generally, Mr. Rawlins remarks that the most characteristic fact of the past year has been the decrease in the number of new orders. But for import restrictions over the German and Austrian frontiers, and the electrification of the railways, matters would have been worse. In the heavy electrical industry, the cost of labour is now about 100 per cent. above pre-war level. In the electro-technical industry 1922 was the worst year ever experienced, though matters have now improved somewhat owing to the fall in the price of raw materials and coal. Silk has risen in price, but rubber is now below pre-war level.

The general lack of confidence, the tendency of workmen to work less, and the unsound state of foreign exchange are undoubtedly the cause of the present crisis.

The total imports of electrical machinery during the first nine months of 1922 amounted to 349 tons (value 1,287,000 fr.) as against 418 tons (value 1,785,000 fr.) for the corresponding period of 1921. Exports were in 1922 3,575 tons (value 18,994,000 francs), and in 1921 5,359 tons (value 32,467,000 fr.). The chief buyers were France, Spain and the United Kingdom.

STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

BONDS.		May 22	May 29
Swiss Confederation 3% 1903	...	79.50%	78.00%
Swiss Confed. 9th Mob. Loan 5%	...	102.55%	101.25%
Federal Railways A-K 3½%	...	83.65%	81.45%
Canton Basle-Stadt 5½% 1921	...	104.50%	103.75%
Canton Fribourg 3% 1892	...	74.25%	73.00%
Zurich (Stadt) 4% 1909	...	99.00%	99.00%

SHARES.		Nom.	May 22	May 29
		Frs.	Frs.	Frs.
Swiss Bank Corporation	...	500	647	645
Crédit Suisse	...	500	680	675
Union de Banques Suisses	...	500	545	545
Fabrique Chimique et-dev. Sandoz	1000	3200	3075	
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2117	2122	
C. F. Bally S.A.	1000	1045	1050	
Fabrique de Machines Oerlikon	500	680	676	
Entreprises Sulzer	...	1000	690	675
S.A. Brown Boveri (new)	...	500	350	348
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	176	183	
Choc. Suisses Peter-Cailler-Kohler	100	113	110	
Comp. de Nav'g'n sur le Lac Léman	500	495	490	

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CORRESPONDENCE.

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RE FRIDAY BANQUETS.

To the Editor of *The Swiss Observer*.

Sir,—Mr. Cusi seems to think there ought to be no Friday banquets, because some people object to eating meat on Friday. What about the vegetarians, who object to eating it at any time? According to Mr. Cusi, then, there ought not to be any banquets at all. If vegetarians go to banquets, they simply refuse the meat, but eat everything else. Catholics have a further advantage: they can eat fish, and at most banquets there is fish; furthermore, after the age of 60 they can eat fish and meat. Still better, they can have a dispensation, which is never refused, to eat meat on Fridays.

Yours faithfully, A. ALTHOUSE.

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