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HOME NEWS

Dr. Jean Musy has been elected President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 1925. Born in Albeuve (Fribourg) in 1876, he has been a member of the Federal Council since 1920, finance being his particular department. As Vice-President the Federal Assembly elected Mr. H. Häberlin, born in 1868 in Bissegger (Thurgau); he is chief of the Department of Justice and Police.

The two Chambers have voted a subsidy of Frs. 200,000 to the Swiss Tourist Office, that is to say, about Frs. 50,000 more than the Federal Council originally recommended.

Some forty members of the National Council have lodged a petition with the Federal Council, suggesting that the military budget should be considerably reduced, in view of the international arbitration treaties concluded during the last few months.

A somewhat startling statement was made in the Geneva Grand Conseil: Figures compiled from official sources prove that of those liable to cantonal taxation only 25 per cent. pay capital tax, and 34 per cent. income tax, that is to say, over two-thirds manage to dodge the tax collector.

An embroidery factory, belonging to His & Co. in Murenthal (near Aarburg) and employing about 400 workpeople, was destroyed by fire and a subsequent explosion on Wednesday evening, Dec. 3.

An association is being formed in the canton of Aargau for the purpose of taking charge of criminals released from prison. National Councillor Hunziker is closely identified with the movement. It is intended to find suitable employment for those discharged, and to combat generally the prejudices which stand in the way of their returning to a regulated life. The cantonal authorities are to be approached for financial assistance. The scheme is the direct outcome of a recent crime, when a friendless and penniless prisoner, on being discharged, committed a murder in order to provide himself with the immediate necessities of existence.

During last week's election campaign for the German Reichstag, Socialist newspapers brought the news that on the occasion of the "Hitler Putsch" some Swiss officers—notably Major Bircher of Aarau—had actively assisted an attempt to restore the German monarchy. The Federal Council at once instituted an enquiry, which showed that these rumours were devoid of the slightest foundation.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

The *Daily Express* (25th Nov.) prints the following from a letter received by Mr. de Watteville's family after his death:

Mr. Vivienne de Watteville, of Berne, whose father, the big-game hunter, was attacked and killed by a lion in the Belgian Congo while he was pursuing a white rhinoceros, gives further particulars of the expedition which led to her father's tragic death in a letter just received by her family.

Mr. de Watteville's letter was sent from Pampon Tana River and gives a striking account of an encounter in the bush with seven lions and lionesses.

"We had a great adventure to-day," she says. "We had just finished breakfast when two excited natives rushed up and informed us that four lions were asleep in the long grass near us. We seized our rifles and some food, and with our native hunters set out for the spot, walking along the dry bed of a river.

"We had walked for two hours, and not seeing any sign of the beasts, decided to return to camp, when suddenly seven lions and lionesses appeared in front of us out of the thick, high grass only fifteen yards away.

"I was so surprised that a lion walked a few yards before me, and I did not even think of shooting at it, though my rifle was in my hands. It was a fascinating and thrilling experience to be surrounded by those large lions. Father shot and wounded a lion, which, with five others, promptly disappeared in the high grass, but the biggest beast, with a black mane, stood still, looking at us curiously.

"Father had time to take careful aim, and the lion fell, but soon got up and bounded into the high grass.

"We found the two lions dead later, and the natives carried their bodies to the camp, where there was much rejoicing that night. The black lion was a splendid specimen, and its skin will adorn the museum at Berne, according to father's wishes.

"It is a curious fact that none of the lions made an attempt to attack us, though they were within springing distance, and in a way we were at their mercy."

Mile. de Watteville's father was attacked only a few days after her letter was written and died in his daughter's arms.

The letters state in conclusion that, in company with her friend, Lady Geoffrey Archer, the wife of the Governor of Uganda, she intends soon to travel across the centre of Africa from Entebbe to Khartoum.

The Fight against Tuberculosis.

Lancet (22nd Nov.):

On Oct. 1st, 1922, a Swiss University Sanatorium (Sanatorium Universitaire) was opened at Leysin. The director and founder of this institution is Dr. Vauthier, who has advocated the idea for some years. In his first report, covering the period from the opening till the end of 1923, he states that 46 students and professors have benefited by this institution. As far as is possible all the patients are engaged in some definite intellectual work, and Dr. Vauthier is well satisfied that such work at regular hours and in individually regulated amounts has never been unfavourable to any of his patients. On the contrary, it was found to have both a sedative and tonic action in giving the patients a saner and more balanced outlook and preserving them from the demoralisation of unemployment. The sanatorium has a good library of 2,000 volumes, and in addition the patients have free access to the general library of Leysin, which has 15,000 volumes. The sanatorium is regularly visited by professors of the different Swiss Universities, who usually make a stay of some days. During these visits they give lectures, and in private conversations they encourage the work of the sick students. With such resources the students of pure science, theology, law, and economy can make progress in their work. Students of applied sciences find enough theoretical work to keep them busy during six to twelve months. Medical students take the opportunity of studying tuberculosis, its diagnosis and treatment. They follow the courses of Dr. Röller and his collaborators. Dr. Vauthier mentions that three of his patients have finished their theses, five are engaged in preparing theses, three have passed examinations after preliminary work in the sanatorium, and two have produced some special scientific work.

The Bundesrat has lately demanded even wider financial credit for the needs of tuberculosis institutions and sanatoriums, although hitherto the astonishingly large expenditure of 8 mill. Swiss francs (£320,000) per annum on these institutions has been covered by State loans. The following are the institutions, sanatoriums, and care centres which are subsidised by the State: 67 associations, a half million francs (£60,000) yearly about one and a half million francs (£60,000) in anti-tuberculosis work. There are also 30 sanatoriums and preventive centres for adults, 21 sanatoriums and preventive centres for children, together with open-air schools, 55 pavilions and tuberculosis wards, including private children's hospitals. In connection with these there has been opened, in the last few years, in addition to the University Sanatorium in Leysin, an institute for the study of tuberculosis and of physiology in high altitudes in Davos. This institute was founded by cantonal and local subscriptions, along with funds from various scientific societies and private generosity. Mention must also be made of the various care and help centres of the League for the Campaign against Tuberculosis in various cantons. These undertake to provide beds, clothing, provisions, and nursing equipment, as well as money. This League also supports centres for advice and free medical inspection in a similar fashion to the welfare centres in England. The State proposes also in the next few years to further extend the subsidised "holiday colonies." This type of institution has been of great service, and statistics show that children who spend their holidays in these colonies in the mountains require no medical attention for the next few years, and their powers of resisting infectious diseases are much increased. Another new institution is the Swiss Army Sanatorium at Novaggio, near Lugano, 644 metres above sea-level. This sanatorium is intended for convalescent tuberculosis soldiers, no active tuberculosis being admitted. The sanatorium has 100 beds. The treatment consists in graduated regular work, chiefly agricultural. To the sanatorium are attached extensive farming grounds.

Alpine Changes.

The Times (1st Dec.):—

I feel sure that this admirably written article will charm the majority of my readers. The writer succeeds in producing the real atmosphere, and it is evident that he is a real lover of the beauty of Alpine Nature.

As the autumn slowly passes into winter a desolation begins to permeate the Alpine air. Colour has vanished from the mountain side. The grass is brown, parched and withered; the trees are turning inky and dark; the torrent is all but silent, for cold has already gripped the melting snow and ice.

Even the sunshine is losing all power; it shines weakly from a hazy sky. The last fine spell is gone; with it the last party of tourists from some lowland university came to cross on foot one of the lower passes. Even though the day was fine and calm, they were glad to reach the village inn, since it is cheerless to gaze upon the highest Alps as they await the coming of the snow. The icy summits seem grey and gaunt; no recent snow has softened their flanks. The upper pastures are deserted; the cattle down below expect to be stalled for the winter. Fretfully they seek the last patches of green hard by the village, until the coming of the snow shall cause the treasured stores of hay to be released. Even the chalets lack the brown warmth of their sunburn beams. The wind blows shrill down the little street and splashes aside the water gushing now less strongly from the fountain spout.

One day there comes a shiver of apprehension among the trees. A sigh of regret sweeps through the woods. A few flakes are driven by a sudden squall. They are fine and hard, like frozen dust that is whirled off the highest summits, as clouds engulf each peak, one after another. Down the gullies the darkening, woolly vapours roll and spread across the lower pastures. The flakes grow thicker, larger; it is the first fall. Next day, perhaps, the wind blows warmer. The ragged covering of white will slowly vanish. It turns to mud; it drops off the trees. This has been but a passing spasm, from which Nature recovers, more forbidding than before. The villagers shiver, for the snow is not there to keep the wind from whistling through the shingled roofs. To their dismay the weather may brighten as the northerly air returns, while, with the shortening days, the sun grows weaker still. Suddenly in one night hard frost has turned the mountain lakes to sheets of black ice. The village street seems bleaker; the people stay indoors unless they are making ready for their winter occupations.

In some seasons the snow falls early and thick, then lies. In other years it comes late and is preceded by weeks of hard, dry frost. It is then usually a tedious, gloomy time. Yet early or late the snow does fall, and stops only to fall again. Then in a single day the face of Nature changes. The mountain sides, under their deep covering of white, lose their harshness; the branches of the trees, fences, wires, posts share in the burden of whiteness. The sky by contrast becomes deep blue, while the sun in the clean, dry air quickly recovers its power. Its light is now reflected from every particle of snow, until the rays seem to regain their power. It is as though the snow became the source of all light and warmth.

With Nature's change the people seem to change, too—their mode of life, clothing, and demeanour. They step out briskly into the cold, dry air; they set busily about their winter work. The snow is shovelled off the tracks, till over the hard, frozen ground the transport of the heavy loads of timber and hay can begin. More sudden yet is the disappearance of all cattle and wheeled things. The sleigh appears, while down the valley the wagon and the cart are left to stand by the roadside at the point where slushy mud takes the place of frozen snow. Henceforth the sleigh will slide down to the spot where passengers and goods leave the runners for the wheels. So every day, according to the weather and the snowfall, the cart slowly retreats farther down the valley, where it is to remain until spring permits its return.

Symptoms of play and of pleasure appear on the mountain side. Already the students have returned on the first fine Sunday, and succeeding week-days reveal the fresh tracks of the ski over the settled sheet of wintry white. During every break in their hours of work the boys on their little ski slide daily over the jumps by the village school. A procession of retainers will soon take possession of the large hotel. Its shutters will open; its lights will gleam after sunset high above the chalet roofs. Even before Christmas some strange figures, curiously arrayed in crinkling, un worn garments, will issue forth from its doors to the nearest ski practice slope, to the merriment of the whole village. The true winter will then have come.

Geneva Peace Plans.

Daily Express (25th Nov.):—

Will England, or rather Great Britain, follow? In spite of indications to the contrary, I still hope so.

The French Government has tabled a Bill for the ratification of the Geneva protocol.

This is evidence that, while the French Government has loyalty agreed to the British request that the question of the Geneva protocol shall not be dealt with at the next meeting of the League of Nations in December, none the less, even should various modifications ultimately be made in the protocol, the French Government has no intention of abandoning the principles and the application of the protocol.

Erinnerungsfeier des Winterthurer Stadtbaillons 63.

My readers will forgive me if I ask them to read the following. As an old 63er I naturally take a particular interest in the doings of this battalion, and I have sincerely regretted being unable to take part in the "Erinnerungsfeier" which the "Bataillon 63" held the other Sunday at Winterthur. I venture to believe that the following speech, made by the former field-preacher of the 26th Regiment, the Rev. Mr. Tobler, will strike a sympathetic chord in old Swiss soldiers' hearts, quite apart from the fact that the speech in itself is a very fine interpretation of the real Swiss feeling where our Army and what it stands for is concerned:—

Offiziere, Unteroffiziere und Soldaten! Liebe Kameraden! Ihr erlaubt mir, dass ich euch heute wieder so anrede, wie ich es so oft habe tun dürfen im langen Grenzbeschützungsdienst, erlaubt mir, dass ich zu euch in der zweiten Person spreche, wie wir es am liebsten tun, wenn das Herz dem Herzen etwas zu sagen hat. Wir gehören doch zusammen, bilden eine Einheit, so verschieden unsere Stellungen im bürgerlichen Leben auch sind, so sehr auch unsere Weltanschauungen und Lebensauffassungen voneinander: a wechen mögen. Wir waren Monate, ja Jahre hindurch Kameraden, dienstbar dem gleichen Volk und Vaterland, zusammengehalten durch den gleichen Willen, diesem Volk das Beste zu geben, erfüllt von dem gleichen Wunsch, unser Volk treu, froh und glücklich, von den furchtbaren Kriegsgefeiern unberührt zu sehen. So möchten wir als Kameraden heute in ernster und doch wieder froher Feier tagen, als Kameraden auseinandergehen und den Geist echter Kameradschaft mitnehmen in unser bürgerliches Leben hinein, wo wir ihn so nötig haben wie im Grenzdienst. Und wenn wir heute einander die Hand zum Grusse drücken und einander in die Augen schauen, dann vergessen wir auch die nicht wenige vor zehn Jahren und später noch eingemachte