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HOME NEWS

The French Government handed to our Minister in Paris last Wednesday, Jan. 23rd, its reply to the note of the Federal Council, dated November 12th, with reference to the Savoy Free Zones. From a telegraphic *résumé* it would appear that, whilst the French Government is not averse to arbitration, it prefers and urges the advantages of a resumption of diplomatic conversations with a view to a settlement.

Under the lead of the Federal authorities, steps are being taken to create an adequate fund in order to assist those who this season have suffered so heavily from avalanches: as is known, risks under this heading cannot be covered in the ordinary way by insurance.

Interesting data about the canton of Grisons are being published in the Census Report, Part 9, which analyses the figures and other particulars established during the Federal census of 1920. A slight increase in the number of inhabitants has taken place, the same being given as 119,854, i.e., 3.1% of the whole of Switzerland. The average of foreign residents has fallen from 17% to 12%; they reside nearly exclusively in the three health centres Davos, Arosa and St. Moritz, where they represent 30 to 40% of the population. German is the predominant language (51%), Romansh being spoken by 33% only and Italian by 15%. The Protestants claim 52% and the Catholics 47%. Agriculture remains the staple occupation, those employed in commerce and the hotel industry not exceeding 17%.

The town of Solothurn, for the first time since the outbreak of the Great War, is able to balance its budget for the year 1924.

After a lengthy discussion, a proposal in the Zurich cantonal council to impose an amusement tax for the purpose of reducing the accumulated deficits and subsidising social institutions, was not proceeded with. — A demand, insisted upon by the Socialists, to reduce the credit granted for rifle-shooting practice, was rejected by a large majority.

The index figure compiled by the Swiss Co-operative Societies (Schweiz. Konsumvereine) records a slight decrease for the month ending December last, but is still 70% above the basic level of June, 1914.

It is stated that the German Legation in Berne has requested the Berlin Government to refuse passports to German nationals who wish to enter Switzerland for pleasure and enjoyment; the Legation states that it considers this measure necessary to safeguard the reputation of the Reich.

The long protracted proceedings with reference to the affairs of the Banque Commerciale in Fribourg came to an end last Saturday, and resulted in Director Fagi being sentenced to 3½ years' imprisonment.

Under the heavy load of snow the roof of a house in Ste. Croix, belonging to M. Alf. Lassieur, gave way. There was no loss of life.

In Geneva the police discovered in the flat of a retired policeman an absinthe distilling plant and a quantity of bottles, harbouring this "forbidden fruit."

Lieut.-Col. Paul Russenberger, proprietor of a surgical appliances business in Zurich, was killed last Thursday evening (Jan. 17th) in a motor accident whilst driving in the Sihlwald; another occupant of the car, Mr. Landolt, a cotton manufacturer from Erlenbach, was taken to hospital suffering from a broken thigh.

A large poultry farm, belonging to the brothers Chénal in Sus Etraz (Morges), was completely destroyed by fire, the estimated damage being in the neighbourhood of Frs. 80,000.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Notre drapeau, ses origines. — Ces points de notre histoire très peu connus du peuple suisse, ont été éclaircis, avec compétence, 17 janvier soir, au local de la Société des sous-officiers, par M. le premier-lieutenant Roger Lang.

Après une brève introduction démontrant combien ce lambeau d'étoffe suscite le courage des hommes, et combien il doit être respecté et défendu. M. Lang remonta loin dans l'histoire pour retrouver les vestiges de la croix qui figure actuellement sur notre emblème national. A l'origine, la croix fut d'abord un signe chrétien, qui figurait sur les fanions et écharpes des soldats des guerres saintes, puis fut de plus en plus utilisé par les peuples de l'Occident dans la composition de leurs armes et de leurs insignes.

Quant à la couleur rouge formant le fond de notre emblème, elle figure longtemps comme insigne impérial, et se répandit parmi les peuples guerriers, dont les chefs suprêmes accordaient ou donnaient à d'autres peuples le droit d'en faire un drapeau à leur usage.

Pour en revenir à notre drapeau, ce n'est que depuis 1480 que la croix fut adoptée dans les cantons suisses et seulement comme signe de ralliement. Depuis cette époque, chaque canton adopta la croix sur ses couleurs cantonales.

Ce fut en 1815 que Guillaume-Henri Dufour, qui fut plus tard général, proposa d'adopter un emblème fédéral, au lieu du drapeau cantonal, et créer ainsi une unité d'emblème. Ce projet rencontra une vive opposition de la part des cantons qui tenaient à leurs couleurs nationales. Ce ne fut qu'en 1840 qu'un drapeau fédéral fut adopté, avec la croix blanche sur fond rouge; les proportions actuelles ont été maintes fois controversées, et il n'y a guère qu'une vingtaine d'années que les proportions de la croix actuelle ont été arrêtées définitivement.

Le premier-lieutenant Lang, qui n'avait pas été moins éloquent qu'au prétoire, fut chaleureusement applaudi par une nombreuse et attentive assistance.

(*La Suisse*.)

Terrible combat d'un chasseur contre un sanglier. — Un chasseur de Termes, près de Charleville, M. Fréville, était à la chasse dans la forêt, au lieu dit Le Fond de la Barrière, quand tout à coup il se trouva en présence d'un énorme sanglier. Le chasseur tira sur l'animal qui, atteint, tomba d'abord sur les genoux, puis se redressant, fonça sur le chasseur. M. Fréville fut renversé et reçut un formidable coup de boutoir à la hanche. Un lutte violente s'engagea entre l'homme et la bête, sur le sol. Le chasseur était aidé de ses chiens. Pendant le combat, M. Fréville put introduire le canon du fusil dans la gueule du sanglier et faire partir le coup. Le sanglier fut enfin tué. Il pesait 240 livres. Au cours de la lutte un chien, qui défendait son maître, a été éventré. (La *Sentinelle*.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Die Schweiz im deutschen Geistesleben.

The Times (10th Jan.):—

"Von Art und Kunst der deutschen Schweiz." Von Josef Nadler. "Die Dichterschule von St. Gallen." Von Samuel Singer. "Walliser Sagen." Von Johannes Jegerlehner. (All published by H. Haessel, Leipzig.) These three little books are early volumes in what promises to be an interesting and very comprehensive series, entitled "Die Schweiz im deutschen Geistesleben" (Switzerland in German Intellectual Life), whose aim needs no further description. In the first, Professor Josef Nadler, whose authority on questions of race and culture is considerable—as readers of his "Berliner Romanistik" (reviewed here on February 23, 1922) will be aware—gives a general sketch of the development of Swiss culture, more particularly in regard to the German-speaking cantons. It is an excellent summary, the conclusion of which is that the Swiss people were never "übergeistig," never let the imagination and intellect obscure the claims of the body, in fact, regarding art as luxury, sometimes subordinated all to physical discipline; secondly, that Swiss literature has an ineradicable tendency towards the epic, the narrative is definitely unlyrical. From such generalizations we step into solid and detailed erudition with Herr Singer's account of the St. Gall school of literature—above all, the two Notkers and the two Ekkehards, the first and fourth. A separate chapter by Herr Wagner gives an account of the significance of St. Gall in the early history of ecclesiastical music. The third volume is a collection, by the best authority on the folklore of the Canton of Valais, of typical Valais popular stories. In an engaging introduction Professor Jegerlehner gives an account of his predecessors in the collection of the stories and of his own experiences in research. To specialists in folk-stories the collection will be interesting for purposes of comparison, while to the ordinary reader it has attractions as a reading book.

Ten Alpine Pastorals.

Musical News and Herald (5th Jan.):—

Messrs. J. and W. Chester have published "Ten Alpine Pastorals" for voice and piano/forte arranged by Alfred Henry. They consist of old Swiss melodies with French words by various writers. Their chief

interest lies in the melodies, which are grateful to sing, rhythmic and ear-haunting. A selection from them would make an interesting group at a vocal récital.

Swiss Judges to advise Angora Government.

The Times (11th Jan.):—

It is reported that the Swiss Federal Court, at the request of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, will nominate Judge Barde, of Geneva, and Professor Sauser Hall, of Lausanne, for appointment by the Turkish Government as judicial advisers to the Ministry of Justice in Angora.

Stabilisation of the Mark—A Swiss Complaint.

Financial Times (14th Jan.):—

There is a good deal of discontent throughout the industrial world in Switzerland at the treatment extended to the Swiss franc in Germany, due to the system introduced in that country for the stabilisation of the mark. This stabilisation, it is pointed out, has been obtained by decreeing fixed exchanges for the dollar, the Swiss franc, the Swedish crown and the Dutch florin. The dollar exchange was fixed at 4,200 milliards paper marks, which corresponds in gold marks to the pre-war value of the dollar, while the Swiss franc has not been treated on the same basis. Thus the latter has been fixed at 732 milliards paper marks, corresponding to 73 pfennigs gold, whereas before the war the value of the Swiss franc was 81 pfennigs.

Owing to this depreciation of the Swiss currency, Swiss exporters to Germany, compared with American or Swedish, suffer a loss of 8 per cent. The Swiss newspapers have taken this matter up, and it is expected that steps will be taken to bring about a remedy.

Why it should be left to the Swiss newspapers to take this matter up, if the facts are as stated above, passes my comprehension. Have we got a Federal Government? Or are they still somewhat afraid at Berne of our once mighty neighbour across the Rhine? I should think that Switzerland is sufficiently strong and its goodwill sufficiently valuable to Germany for our Government to be able to prevent any injustice of that kind being done to our interests. If not, why not?

Swiss expel Cossack Singers.

Evening Standard (Jan. 11th):—

Police have expelled from Switzerland the Cossack Singers from the Don, who for some time have been giving concerts in Switzerland.

Why?

Winter Sports.

Last Sunday had a distinct feeling of Spring in it, or rather in the air, and Winter Sport articles will, no doubt, soon cease to have any special attraction for my readers. Nevertheless, I think, as a kind of final message from our snowy homeland, the following two articles deserve reprinting in our columns. *

Yorkshire Post (15th Jan.):—

The races for the British Ski Association Challenge Cup, to encourage British ski runners to compete against other nations, were decided in Mürren on the 12th and 13th inst. Switzerland, Germany and France have followed the Norwegian model, and their big races always include an equal amount of uphill and downhill, and a long stretch along the level, but for British ski runners the art of skiing begins when the runner turns downhill. Getting uphill is regarded as a necessary evil. The British cup is awarded on the result of two events—a pure downhill race of three thousand feet, and a "slalom" race. The latter is a race round obstacles, and is a fine test of a ski-runner's powers to control his direction when moving at a high speed among obstacles.

The first race was run down the Tschuggen glade, in perfect weather conditions. There were twelve British and ten Swiss competitors. The race was won by A. Gertsch, a well-known local ski-runner from Wengen, who has competed in many first-class Swiss events. His time was five minutes five seconds. Others were placed thus:—2, C. E. W. Macintosh, the Scottish Rugby international, five minutes ten seconds; 3, Werner Salveisberg (Berne University); 4, Lord Knebworth; 5, H. Salveisberg (Berne University); 6, T. Lloyd (Cambridge University); 7, H. G. Waits (Oxford University); 8, Dr. Morland; 9, Howard Ford; and 10, Cardinale (Berne University).

On the 13th the Slalom Competition took place in delightful weather and perfect snow conditions. Macintosh came down the very difficult hard snow course in the morning with excellent dash and control, and easily finished first. The competition was concluded in the afternoon in soft snow. Macintosh's ski binding unfortunately came off at a critical point, and he lost a minute in readjusting it. This mishap undoubtedly lost him the cup, as he would otherwise have been easily first in the race.

The following is the combined result of the competition:—1, A. Gertsch; 2, Werner Salveisberg; 3, C. E. W. Macintosh; 4, Howard Ford; 5, H. Salveisberg; 6, Dr. Morland; 7, Lord Knebworth; 8, T. Lloyd; and 9, L. L. B. Angus.

Our compatriots have done well, it seems, and we are pleased. Too often our foreign guests take with them all the best prizes. In that respect Switzerland and Swiss Sports often are very similar to English Sports, i.e., the guests often gain the victories, the pupils outclassing their teachers, as it were.

The Cradle of the Winter Sports Craze.

Country Life (12th Jan.):—

Sixty years ago or therabouts a doctor, whose practice was among the peasantry of a certain Swiss district, announced to the medical fraternity a very interesting observation which he had made during the