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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

A national vote will be taken on Sunday, Feb. 17th, on the proposed revision of the Swiss factory law, which will permit and legalise, under certain conditions, an extension of the working hours from 48 to 54 hours per week. In another column we publish the appeal and conclusions submitted by the Swiss propaganda committee in favour of this revision.

\* \* \*

St. Gall has the distinction of being the most expensive town in Switzerland, according to statistics compiled by the Swiss Co-operative Society (Schweiz. Konsumverein).

\* \* \*

Thun has increased its population by 10% during the last year, the number being now 16,710; more houses have been built than in the best pre-war years.

\* \* \*

It is reported that the present British Minister in Berne, Sir Milne Cheetham, will be transferred to Athens.

\* \* \*

The vaudois Socialist party has decided to expel one of their leaders, Dr. Jeanneret-Marinkin, as the latter's Bolshevik tendencies were considered incompatible with further membership.

\* \* \*

The prizes in connection with the Eidg. Schützenfest (Tir fédéral) in Aarau have been ordered from the following firms: Ulysse Nardin, Le Locle and Geneva (gold watches), Fabrique Omega, Bienna (bracelet watches), Zenith Watch Co., Le Locle (silver watches), and Huguénin Frères & Co. (Medals).

\* \* \*

Whole editions of valuable historical works were destroyed by a fire, which broke out on Friday evening (Feb. 1st) in the book store of Helbling & Lichtenhahn in Basle.

\* \* \*

It is stated that a Berlin Treasury official has arrived at St. Moritz for the purpose of acquainting himself personally with the reported prodigality of the German tourists, who may probably in consequence be "strafed" by the imposition of a special tax. The Grisons hotel managers are strongly protesting against this espionage, which is having a deleterious effect on their hotel bills.

\* \* \*

An act of vengeance on the part of his brother Fritz is said to be the cause of the fire which destroyed the farm buildings, belonging to Hans Schneeberger at Grub, near Balsenwil (Aargau).

\* \* \*

Dr. Louis Guillaume, the former Director of the Federal Statistical Bureau, died in Epanier, near Neuchâtel, at the age of 91; in his younger days he successfully interested himself in the improvement of the hygienic conditions of schools and prisons.

\* \* \*

Dr. John L. Gignoux, the son of the President of the Geneva Conseil d'Etat, died from the after-effects of influenza last Saturday, in the train near Zurich, during his journey from Warsaw to Geneva. He was only in the fortieth year of his age. The deceased was in charge of the Polish Legation since the departure of Col. Pfylfier, and will be remembered by a large circle of London friends as one of the chargés d'affaires at our Legation during part of the period when M. Carlin was Minister.

\* \* \*

Prof. Lucien Gautier, a member of the International Red Cross Committee, died on Friday (Feb. 1st) in Geneva at the age of 74. He lectured for 21 years at the University of Lausanne and was the author of many well-known books on theological subjects.

\* \* \*

## LA REVISION DE LA LOI SUR LES FABRIQUES.

(Appel publié par le "Comité suisse d'action en faveur de la révision.")

La fortune nationale s'était considérablement accrue depuis le milieu du XIX siècle jusqu'en 1914 parce que l'activité économique avait pu prendre

un libre essor et grâce au goût inné du travail manifesté par le peuple suisse.

Cette augmentation de la fortune nationale a permis de rendre la cité habitable pour tous, tandis que le travail intense de tous avait mis la Suisse en mesure de conquérir une situation exceptionnelle et enviée sur le marché mondial, bien qu'elle n'eût ni accès à la mer, ni matières premières.

A cette période relativement favorable a succédé, malheureusement, une autre période de lourdes pertes et de cruels déficits. Il en est résulté que la Confédération, les cantons et les communes ont aujourd'hui une dette totale de  $7\frac{1}{2}$  milliards de francs, dont les intérêts doivent être payés et qui doit être amortie. Ces obligations comportent une élévation considérable des charges de chacun, charges qui ne seraient tolérables que si notre puissance économique et financière augmentait. Et tout cela ne facilite guère le développement et l'extension de nos œuvres sociales, assurances, etc.

Or, il faut constater que la façon dont a été réglementée, chez nous, la durée du travail dans l'industrie nous a partiellement désarmés au moment précis où la concurrence étrangère devenait plus redoutable; notre loi sur la durée du travail a imposé une nouvelle et une lourde charge à la production.

Notre industrie, gênée par une loi trop rigide, a dû renoncer à exécuter des commandes livrables à court terme ou s'en est vu refuser d'autres à cause de ses prix trop élevés; cela a aggravé la crise de chômage et fait monter encore le coût de la vie.

Les améliorations techniques apportées à notre outillage industriel et à nos méthodes de travail n'ont pas suffi à compenser la diminution de l'effort fourni par l'homme. D'autre part, partout où il a été possible de prolonger la durée du travail, même dans les faibles limites permises par la loi actuelle, les renvois d'ouvriers ont cessé et l'on a pu engager du personnel nouveau. Mais notre industrie ne peut espérer reconquérir ses débouchés que si elle réussit à produire à meilleur compte en prolongeant quelque peu, lorsque cela sera nécessaire, la durée du travail pour diminuer ses frais généraux.

Personne ne peut plus mettre en doute que l'affaiblissement de notre industrie ait eu des répercussions fâcheuses pour toute la population et chaque citoyen a un intérêt évident à ce que l'industrie retrouve son ancienne prospérité.

Chaque citoyen peut y contribuer en acceptant l'article 41 nouveau de la loi sur les fabriques, qui ne sera applicable qu'en temps de crise grave et permettra de porter à 54 heures la durée de la semaine de travail pendant une période limitée à trois ans.

Qu'a-t-on fait à l'étranger, tout spécialement dans les pays où l'industrie est une redoutable concurrente de la nôtre?

Ou bien l'on s'y est soigneusement abstenu (Etats-Unis, Angleterre) de légiférer dans le domaine de la durée du travail et de restreindre ainsi la faculté pour l'industrie de s'adapter aux circonstances.

Ou bien, lorsqu'on y a légiféré, on a eu la prudence de laisser à l'industrie la faculté de prolonger, au delà de 48 heures par semaine, la durée du travail. C'est notamment le cas en France.

Dans les pays où l'on s'était, comme en Suisse, donné trop hâtivement une loi rigide, on l'a déjà corrigée comme c'est le cas en Hollande et en Suède, où l'on est en train de faire, comme en Belgique.

Quant à l'Allemagne, on y a simplement renoncé aux règles embarrassantes.

Il faut rappeler d'ailleurs que dans tous ces pays on a refusé de s'engager à observer les préceptes absolu de la convention de Washington.

L'article 41 nouveau de la loi sur les fabriques est, en réalité, uniquement destiné à aider à la Suisse à sortir de la crise actuelle. On ne peut pas contester sa modération.

L'article 41 nouveau ne porte pas atteinte au principe des 48 heures, qui reste fixé dans l'article 40 de la même loi. L'article 40 reste intact. L'article 41 ne fait que donner à notre industrie dans certaines conditions limitativement fixées, un peu, plus de cette liberté dont elle a absolument besoin pour lutter, pour vivre et, si possible, pour prospérer de nouveau.

Aucun citoyen sensé et réfléchi ne voudra prendre la responsabilité d'affaiblir par un vote négatif l'espérance d'une amélioration de notre situation économique.

Volume III of "The Swiss Observer," containing Nos. 71—134 (October 14th, 1922, to December 29th, 1923), bound in dark cloth with gilt-lettered back, is now ready and can be obtained for the price of 17.6.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### R.I.P.

There is a grief which is too deep for words, at least during the first period, when the senses are numbed by the stunning blow which has befallen them, and when the heart becomes cold with the hopelessness of the immediate outlook. Such a feeling has been produced on "Kyburg" by the sudden loss of our beloved Mr. Georges Démier. This feeling was intensified, almost immediately afterwards, by the news of the death of ex-President Wilson. Between the two many comparisons might be drawn, but one Christian ideal animated them both, and, what is infinitely more, radiated from both, namely, that intense Love of their fellow-men.

### Effect of Ruhr Action.

*The Times* (Jan. 28th) states:—

The results of the traffic on the Rhine to Basle during 1923 have just been made known. They are rather poor. The situation in the Ruhr and the prolonged periods of low water have so hindered traffic that not a single lighter has come up as far as Basle since August 19.

There has been a 7.5 per cent. decline in traffic compared with 1922, the tugs having handled only 40,000 tons. More than half of this—namely, 26,000 tons—was inward traffic and consisted chiefly of wheat (40 per cent.) and coal (20 per cent.); the principal items in the remainder being copra, petrol, wood, oats, oil, wool, and sugar. Of the exports, about one-half consisted of condensed milk, one-third of cement, then carbide and asphalt. The greater portion of this traffic was with Britain.

Fortunately there are signs of a revival this year. Improved arrangements are being made at Basle, while at Strasbourg a company, known as the Société Franco-Suisse de Navigation, has just been formed for the purpose of developing rapid services between Antwerp, Strasbourg, and Switzerland, either by the Rhine when the water is favourable, or by the Alsace-Lorraine railways. Further, the Netherland-Scherijnaard Vereniging of Rotterdam, which has an available tonnage of about 420,000 tons, has recently opened a general agency at Basle in the form of a limited company.

British trade is likely to benefit by the reduction which it is proposed to make in Swiss postal rates. It is said that the Government intends, during 1924, to lower the international rate on letters from 40 to 30 centimes, and on post-cards from 25 to 20 centimes.

### Swiss Economic Situation.

We all know that our country is still suffering a great deal from the after-effects of the Great War, or rather from the ill-effects of the "little" peace. The following note, which appeared in *The Times* (Jan. 28th) and in other English papers as well, will, I think, interest a number of my readers:—

According to advices from Berne, the number of completely unemployed in Switzerland at the end of 1923 totalled roughly 26,800, while those partially employed reached 12,800, or a total of 40,000 in round figures.

The number of the completely unemployed thus attained 27 per cent. of the figure for February, 1922, at a time when unemployment had reached its highest point. The highest figure as regards the partially unemployed was registered at the end of April, 1921, and the number of unemployed in this category attained, at the end of last year, 13 per cent. of that figure. At the end of 1922 the total of unemployed was about 74,000, which shows a reduction of 34,000 during 1923.

Nevertheless, there are still about 40,000 unemployed in Switzerland—a serious matter for a small country—and which shows that even now there are many industries confronted with difficulties of all kinds. Those difficulties will, it is believed, be overcome by furnishing the industries affected with the means for diminishing the cost of production.

The textile industry, for instance, as well as the metal and machine industries, still show a large number of unemployed, and these are the export industries which should have their place in the world markets. They will not, however, it is feared, again find an outlet unless they can reduce the cost of production.

The possibilities of work in the building trade have declined almost everywhere, and this set-back will probably continue during the present month, inasmuch as work has had to be suspended in different places owing to the very low temperature and the heavy snowfalls. As a set-off against this, the unemployment in the hotel industry shows a notable decrease, thanks, in great measure, to the large influx of visitors in the Alpine resorts. The watch industry also shows a marked decrease in unemployment. Unemployment has also decreased in the food industries and clothing industry. There is, however, an increase of unemployment in non-professional labour, while the liberal and intellectual professions still furnish a large contingent of unemployed, and it will not be easy to find posts for the 800 of that category corresponding to their aptitudes.

### Bad News for Swiss Smokers.

*The Times* (Jan. 29th):—

In consequence of the increase of Customs duties on tobacco, the price of cigarettes will be raised in Switzerland by rates varying from 20 to 50 per cent. according to the quality. It is reported that the rise in price will cause many cigarette manufacturers to close their works.

I suppose our people at home will have to resort again to the kind of cigar which we used to call

the "Freimaurer-Zigarre"! Warum? Weil sie nur von einem Maurer und auch von diesem nur im Freien geraucht werden darf.—See?

#### Many New Treaties.

*The Star* (30th Jan.):—

Arbitration treaties are becoming the order of the day. The Swiss Federal Council has just approved a draft treaty with Portugal, and has in preparation similar treaties with Holland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Austria, while negotiations are also in progress with Hungary.

#### State Enterprise—Encouraging Results of Swiss Federal Railways.

Though the final accounts for the past financial year are not yet available, it is certain that the Swiss State Railways system has earned in 1923—for the first time since 1913—a sufficient surplus to cover its fixed debt and sinking fund charges. This result is beyond expectation, as a deficiency of about 25 million francs had been, budgeted for, though already during the latter part of 1923 it had become evident that the final result would be a better one. The net earnings for the past year amount to about 114 millions, or 76 millions more than for 1922. About 21 millions only are accounted for by increased receipts, whilst a decline in working expenditure is responsible for the balance of 55 millions, as, owing to cheaper coal and a better utilisation of labour, large savings have been made. The profit and loss account for 1922 had shown a net deficiency of 45½ millions, but probably the interest charges for the past year are larger than in 1922; otherwise one might expect an actual credit balance. Even should this be the case, it would not go far towards making up for the deficit accumulated between 1914 and 1922, which exceeds 210½ millions. In any case, however, one is entitled to assume that the Swiss railway finances have now turned the corner, and that with the improvement of general economic conditions this deficit will be gradually wiped out.

It is far too often said and believed by unthinking people that the State cannot do anything well, at least nothing in the way of industrial or commercial enterprise. How often do we grumble at the performances of the Post Office! And how seldom do we take the trouble to inform ourselves and to find out a few facts which would so quickly show us that no private enterprise could possibly do the job as well and as cheaply. The same applies, of course, to Railways. Of course, I remember the voting for and against the acquisition of the Federal Railways, or rather the former systems. Our French-Swiss compatriots were very much against the deal, probably because, with their finer intuition, they had a feeling that our Teutonic neighbours, especially the Frankfort-on-Main crowd, might get the financial upper-hand in our State finances. Well, during the first few years, of course, everything went wrong. Services became less good, fares went up, and the personnel wanted and got higher wages. The selling companies had naturally neglected to keep the rolling stock in good order, and even the permanent way and other items were badly in want of repairs. On the other hand, the people, now the proud owners of the railways, insisted on repairs being done, on fares being lowered, on improvements in services, on betterments here and there. It was the Government's fault at all times and always, if things were not quite what they ought to have been, and grumblers were loud in their complaints. And—look at our railways now! Hear what foreigners of all countries have to say regarding them! They are something which does us great credit. And the cost? Does anybody to-day seriously maintain that it would have been better to leave them to the private companies? If so, I should like to hear his arguments. I should also like to know that some of my readers at least, i.e., those among them who can and do think, will refrain in future from simply apeing the notorious stut news-papers, which are condemning Government industrial or commercial enterprise in any and every form, except in those spheres in which the owners and their friends of such newspapers are financially or otherwise interested. If we must have vested interests, I think it is better to have such interests vested in the State! You have more chance to do something useful with your single vote than you have with your single voting paper at a Shareholders' Meeting! Think it over!

#### Winter Sports.

I do not know whether the letter I reprint below from the *Saturday Review* (Jan. 26th) has had a sequel or not, but I think it is interesting, because it shows what a lively interest Britshers are taking in Winter Sports, and, incidentally, how such Sports can promote and do promote international companionship.

Sir.—Three years ago, in the 'Saturday Review,' I gave a few hints for the easy acquisition of the art of skiing; many visitors to the Alps and other snowy regions have since told me they benefited therefrom. The Swiss winter sport resorts are this winter fuller than ever, especially with English visitors. May I, through your columns, therefore appeal to them to interest themselves in the sending of a Swiss team to compete for the Blue Riband of Ski-ing (both in long-distance running and jumping), at the famous Holmenkollen meeting, held annually in the third week of February, just outside Kristiania?

No Swiss skier has ever competed there, and the only countries that have been represented in the past are Germany, Sweden, and Finland, and, last year, also Czechoslovakia, by two Germans. Except in 1922, when A. Collin, from Finland, won the 50-kilometre cross-country Ski-ing Championship, the Norwegians have hitherto always swept the board. In the first decade of the century the older Swiss were as a rule poor and clumsy skiers, and even in 1914, when

after a considerable interval, I re-visited the Engadine, the improvement was not very striking, to judge by the local guide who accompanied me on the Bernina-Diavolezza-Morteratsch Glacier round trip. But in 1910 some of the young Swiss skiers already showed great promise. I am thinking especially of the following:—Fritz Gertsch, of Wengen; Steuri, of Grindelwald; and Capiti, of Davos; but there were also the Odermatts, of Klopfersteins, of Adelboden, and the Odermatts, of Engelberg. Most of these must be still in their prime, and might render a good account of themselves even against the Norwegians.

Perhaps Mr. Hargreaves, the well-known curling "skip"—whose terrific voice I have in the past so frequently heard filling the Grindelwald valley from the Wetterhorn to Schynigge Platte, and who is still a regular visitor to Grindelwald—might take the lead in getting such a team together, and if necessary collect some funds for the purpose. There is no time to lose if there are to be any Swiss representatives at this year's Holmenkollen festival.—Tournebroche."

#### The Charm of Baden—Aargau.

It had to come, although I do not know whether to be pleased or not. The English have discovered Baden, and what will happen next you can imagine for yourself. Baden hoteliers will be pleased. But will the Swiss visitors, mostly good bourgeoisie class and peasants from the Ostschweiz, who yearly go to Baden to "cleanse themselves of their sins"? One of the finest attractions of Baden, the writer of the following article in the *Morning Post* (Jan. 22) has not discovered yet, namely, the famous "Goldwänder." We all know that a great number of the miraculous cures obtained at Baden are due to wise and frequent inner application of "Goldwänder." I do hope that if the English tourist goes to Baden, his palate will not be tuned to Goldwänder, so that this wonderful "cure" will still be obtainable at Swiss prices for those who appreciate it—as does "Kyburg."

In a little valley through which flows the Limmat, surrounded by wooded hills, lies the old town of Baden-les-Bains in Canton Aargau, from the earliest times noted for its hot sulphur springs. The Romans, who realised the medicinal value of these waters, founded quite a large settlement at Baden, and all through the centuries the sick made their pilgrimage to the town.

Baden is divided into two parts, one almost encircled by a bend of the river, and mainly containing the hotels built over hot springs, each house containing its own bath room and attendants. Though some of these hotels have existed for three hundred years, all have quite recently been modernised and are very comfortable, and there are prices to suit every purse. About ten minutes' walk from the main hotels lies the business part of the town, with its quaint old houses, many dating from 1600 A.D. Dominating all are the ruins of an ancient castle. There is also an interesting bridge and the Bailiff's Tower (the latter now a museum), where all who entered the city had to pay toll to the Hapsburg princes. The walks in the woods round Baden are many and beautiful, and there are many places of interest in the neighbourhood.

Unfortunately, Baden is little known to English people, though it was largely visited by the French, especially before the war. The best months for English people to visit Baden are May, June and September. From May 16th to September 30th one express service is run daily from London via Calais, Basle, to Zurich, returning by Basle and Boulogne to London. The Calais-Zurich through carriage stops at Baden.

#### AUSLANDSCHWEIZERTAG.

This year's Basle Fair, which will be held from May 17th to May 27th, will again be the occasion for that traditional gathering, the "Auslandschweizertag," which plays such an important rôle in the relations with the home country of the many thousand Swiss residing abroad. The date has been fixed for Monday, May 19th, and the organising committee, which, of course, includes our indefatigable friend Mr. Henri Stucki, is already busy settling the necessary details. This, the seventh, annual gathering will be on slightly different lines than on previous occasions; past experience has shown that the delegates from abroad were not always afforded sufficient time to unfold and argue their particular views and grievances. Whilst it is recognised that real success is synonymous with what is understood by a "Landsgemeinde," it is most important that notice of any resolutions or proposals, as well as of the subject intended to be raised by individual members, should be in the hands of the committee as early as possible. The Swiss societies abroad are, therefore, invited to give this matter their early consideration and to instruct their elected representatives to communicate any suggestions to Dr. W. Meile, Basle, or the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger at Fribourg, who will both be delighted to render assistance and supply any information required.

The official reception and main discussion will take place in the large conference hall of the Basle Fair buildings now being erected; additional rooms will be reserved for debates which deal with legal, consular and other minor questions. The day will be concluded with the customary banquet and patriotic entertainment.

A conducted party, at reduced rates, for English visitors to the Basle Fair will be arranged by *The Swiss Observer* on similar lines to last year. The party will leave London on Saturday, May 17th, and is open to any of our readers who wish to make use of these special travelling facilities. Further particulars will be published in due course.

#### STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

	BONDS.	Jan. 27	Feb. 5
Swiss Confederation 3% 1903	... 75.00%	75.12%	
Swiss Confed. 9th Mob. Loan 5%	100.40%	100.40%	
Federal Railways A—K 3½%	79.30%	79.00%	
Canton Basle-Stadt 5½% 1921	102.12%	102.00%	
Canton Fribourg 3% 1892...	70.75%	70.00%	

	SHARES.	Nom.	Jan. 27	Feb. 5
		Fr.	Fr.	Fr.
Swiss Bank Corporation ...	500	668	686	
Crédit Suisse ...	500	714	730	
Union de Banques Suisses ...	500	563	572	
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	3570	3432	
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2642	2575	
C. F. Bally S.A. ...	1000	1117	1117	
Fabrique de Machines Oerlikon ...	500	630	630	
Entreprises Sulzer ...	1000	690	677	
S.A. Brown Boveri (new) ...	500	319	312	
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	187	189	
Choc. Suisses Peter-Cailler-Kohler	100	113	113	
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