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HOME NEWS

As from April 1st no further subsidies will be granted by the Confederation for the provision of relief work for the unemployed; it is stated that their continuation is incompatible with the financial position of the State, and retards the return of normal conditions in the economic life of the country.

During the last ten years the indebtedness of the Confederation, Cantons and Communes has increased about fourfold, and amounts now to some 6.5 milliard francs, or Frs. 1,666 per head of the population. The interest charge absorbs about 325 million francs, or 83 francs per inhabitant.

Last year about half-a-million francs were granted to young emigrants in order to facilitate their start in foreign countries; for this year the Federal Council has withdrawn this valuable encouragement.

In reply to a motion, drawing attention to the fact that in certain frontier districts, especially Basle and Geneva, foreign letters and printed matter are posted outside Switzerland, the Federal Council states that it is unable to stop this unpatriotic practice which is depriving the Swiss Post Office of considerable sums.

The accounts for 1923 of the Canton Glaris close with a surplus of Frs. 119,471, against an anticipated deficit of over Frs. 400,000.

Amongst the penalties, enacted by a divisional court sitting at Solothurn, is one of ten days' imprisonment against an infantryman for wearing army trousers unlawfully.

The proposed ratification of the Opium Convention is meeting with some opposition from the cantons of Basle, Zurich and Neuchâtel on various grounds, constitutional and legal.

Towards the reconstruction of the Furka road, which has recently been damaged by avalanches, the Confederation will contribute 50,000 francs.

Surprised by a heavy snowdrift, several members of a ski-ing party were buried on the Rautalp (Glaris), one of them, Mr. Albert Jenny, of Ennenda (Zurich), being unable to extricate himself. A search party subsequently recovered his body.

Three months' detention and a fine is the penalty incurred by a Bernese business man, Mr. A. Ornstein, for having, some months ago, run over and killed through careless driving a local dentist, Mr. Huber.

For defamation of character, Mr. Georges Oltrame has been sentenced to a fine of 200 francs. Mr. Oltrame—commonly called Geo—is a satirical writer and editor of a weekly publication, entitled "Pilori," in which he exposes and criticises the shortcomings of public institutions and politicians, especially when the latter belong to the Jewish faith. The plaintiff in the case was National Councillor Dicker, a Genevese advocate and leader of the local Social Democrats; born in Russia and naturalized a few years ago, he will be best remembered as representing the civil party in the Conradi trial.

PASSPORTS AND IDENTITY BOOKS.

The election manifesto of Mr. J. Scott-Duckers, the Liberal candidate for the Abbey Division of Westminster, contains the following reference which may raise the hopes—not too highly, we suggest—of the many globe-trotters who justly resent the present restrictions and formalities:

"As a believer in liberty and freedom, I am totally opposed to the vexatious restrictions upon shopkeepers and caterers which are a legacy of the war. I will give my fullest support to their entire abolition, as well as to the removal of other war-time vexations, such as *Passports* and *Identity Books* in the case of all persons of known respectability and good character."

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Artillerie ancienne. — Grâce aux démarches faites par M. Bujard, chef du département militaire, la Confédération a donné à l'Etat de Vaud les deux grandes pièces d'artillerie qui étaient placées au sommet des forts de Dailly et qui viennent d'être désaffectées.

Ces deux canons, qui sont les plus longues pièces à feu de l'artillerie suisse, sortent des usines Krupp et mesurent 3 m. 66 de longueur et 10,5 cm. de diamètre. Elles datent de 1881 et sont de construction identique à celle des canons de 12 cm. Elles furent d'abord placées à l'arsenal de Lucerne, puis amenées en 1896 à Dailly où elles ont été en service jusqu'à l'an dernier. Construites pour la poudre noire, elles ont cependant donné d'excellents résultats avec la poudre blanche. Avec les obus elles portaient au delà de 10 kilomètres et avec les shrapnels au delà de 8 kilomètres. Chaque pièce a tiré jusqu'à maintenant 3000 coups. Le poids du projectile était de 16 kg.

Ces deux grandes pièces à affût sur roues seront placées devant le château de Morges à côté de deux canons de bronze du XVIIIe siècle, avec lesquels elles formeront les plus beaux ornements de notre Musée militaire. (La Revue.)

Eine Vergesslichkeit-Statistik. — Die Wach- und Schliessgesellschaft veröffentlicht eine kleine Statistik bei deren Lektüre man sich kopfschüttelnd fragt, wie so nicht noch mehr Diebstähle vorkommen. Offenbar gibt es eben doch noch mehr ehrliche Leute als man aus dem Gejammer der Moralisten annehmen könnte. Die Wächter der Gesellschaft fanden in einem Jahr in der Schweiz auf ihren nächtlichen Runden: 18,409 Haustüren, 1,492 Kellertüren, 8,561 Gärten, 1,551 Stalltüren, 3,391 Geschäftstüren, 3,764 Magazintüren, 3,208

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL SWISS SAMPLES FAIR WILL BE HELD AT BASLE

17th to 27th May, 1924.

For information apply to:

The Commercial Division of the Swiss Legation,
32, Queen Anne Street, W.1,

or to:

The Swiss Bank Corporation,
43, Lombardy, E.C. 2 and at Basle.

A special conducted party will be arranged by the *Swiss Observer* to leave London on Saturday, May 17th.

Other travelling facilities may be obtained from the *Swiss Federal Railways*, 11b, Regent Street, S.W.1.

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div. innere Türen, 847 Verandas, 5,637 Fenster, 2,605 Roll-Läden und 81 Kassenschränke geöffnet. Ausserdem 3,310 steckengebliebene Schlüssel und 612 im Freien gebliebene Sachen.

Wenn man dann weiter liest, dass die Securitas-wächter 333 gefundene Sachen abgaben und 18,578 brennende Lichter löschten, 303 offene Wasserhähne und 116 Gashähne schließen mussten, so kommt man zum Schluss, dass Zerstreutheit und Vergesslichkeit längst nicht mehr das Vorrecht von Gelehrten und Professoren ist. (Basler National-Ztg.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KIBURG."

Broadcasting on the Alps.

The Star (5th March):—

The Swiss Alpine Club has been enlisting the aid of "broadcasting" in its life-saving work on the mountains. Small receiving stations have been established in the club chalets and the Alpinist centres, for the purpose of receiving calls for help from those in trouble in the wild.

Tiny portable receiving and dispatch sets are being used by tourists.

As the distances to be covered are never great when measured in an air line, weak currents are satisfactory.

Observatories on Mont Blanc.

The Times (4th March):—

I am pretty certain that the following article will greatly interest a number of our Swiss readers.

Mont Blanc is a tragic mountain, for no fewer than 80 fatal accidents, largely due to avalanches and storms, have occurred to climbers, guides, scientists and others in its ascent or descent, and of the four observatories which have been erected on its summit and higher ridges three have been buried in snow or destroyed. The fact of its supreme height in Europe, 15,782 ft., has proved very tempting to scientists for the carrying out of observations in the higher reaches of the atmosphere, and it is satisfactory that one of these observatories, that of M. Joseph Vallot on the Rocher des Bosses, 14,312 ft. above sea level, has proved of permanent value and great usefulness. The disappearance of the summit observatory of Dr. Janssen has not been an unmixed evil, for to most mountain lovers and climbers its presence was little short of sacrilege, and it is a satisfaction to know that the pure white dome of snow, only large enough to accommodate two or three 'ropes' of climbers, is now unsullied and free.

On the writer's ascent of the mountain last August he was much interested, on reaching the Col des Bosses just below the refuge hut which M. Vallot has so generously erected adjoining his observatory, to see lying on the snow what were clearly recognizable as the remains of Dr. Janssen's summit observatory, and the two guides with and between whom the writer was roped, volunteered the information that this was indeed the débris of the famous observatory, and that it had sunk in the unfathomable snow of the summit, worked its way out to the Chamonix side of the steep snowfield, and been transported with incredible labour to the position where it lay.

As even more romantic stories were current, it appeared advisable to the writer to have a definite authentic record of the true facts, and, thanks to the most kindly response of M. Joseph Vallot himself, especially considering his great age, and also to M. Paul Cupelin, the Chief Guide of the Chamonix community of guides, the true story is briefly related in this article.

After three preliminary ascents, two of them for the purpose of making scientific experiments, M. Vallot, with the assistance of 110 guides, constructed his first observatory in the year 1890, on the very spot where the débris of the Janssen observatory was seen lying by the writer in 1923.

In the succeeding years, 1891 and 1892, the observatory was enlarged, and a separate refuge hut for climbers was erected on the neighbouring Rocher des Bosses, which avoided disturbance of the observers by climbing parties. This Vallot Refuge is of great value, for it is at about this height of 14,000 ft., about one-and-a-half to two hours of climbing below the summit, that mountain sickness usually becomes seriously embarrassing, and the writer himself has reason to bless M. Vallot for his generosity of providing it. The observatory, however, became eventually buried to the root in snow, so it was abandoned in 1898, and M. Vallot, entirely at his own expense of 100,000 francs, erected another, his present observatory, on the Rocher des Bosses itself, blasting a solid foundation out of the rock. The work occupied 45 days, and has proved of permanent value. For this observatory, after 25 years, still defies the tempest and the snows, affording a safe and comfortable shelter to the parties of young scientists who visit it under organised supervision each summer. The veteran scientist himself has made 35 expeditions to the summit and to his observatory, and still takes, at over 70 years of age, the liveliest interest in the scientific memoirs, now over a hundred in number, and many of them very lengthy, which regularly appear to record the results of the observations made.

In the year 1890 Dr. Janssen visited the first observatory, and in spite of emphatic warnings from M. Vallot, who pointed out that one cannot "establish" anything on a glacier or upper mountain snowfield, conceived and persisted in the notion of erecting, with the aid of public subscriptions, an observatory on the unfathomable snow of the summit itself. By the intercession of M. Eiffel, M. Vallot most generously housed the engineers and workmen whom Dr. Janssen engaged, and the observatory was actually constructed on the summit in 1893, to the great disgust of the members of the Alpine Club. No sooner was it completed, than it began to sink in the snow, which slowly but surely engulfed it. It comprised two storeys and was 23 ft. high, with a little turret 6 ft. high carrying a staircase, to give access to an outside observing plat-