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HOME NEWS

The National Council was in an unpleasant mood last Wednesday (June 10th), when the Federal Council presented its report on the Fifth Assembly of the League of Nations. The official reporters opened the debate by venting their view that the assembly had not fulfilled any of the expectations as regards disarmament and the promotion of peace in general. Federal Councillor Motta warmly defended the League, and expressed the hope and firm conviction that the much-discussed Geneva protocol, which is opposed by England, would be accepted at a future meeting; he repudiated the attacks which had been levelled against the Swiss delegate of one of the sub-committees, Prof. C. de Reynold, who was accused of being out of harmony with democratic aspirations. Several speakers suggested that all the Swiss public libraries should receive from the Confederation, free of charge, the most important classical and modern works on pacifism and of peace furtherance.

National Councillor Nyfeler is asking the Federal Council what steps are in contemplation so as to ensure a better fulfilment—than has been the case heretofore—of the military duties on the part of the Swiss residing abroad.

In the National Council Mr. Motta stated that a friendly protest had been lodged with the French Government against the construction of Customs buildings near the Geneva frontier.

During the discussions of the military penal code in the National Council, the Socialists and Communists strenuously opposed the inclusion of an article which made it an offence to create or support organisations (cells) tending to undermine the discipline in the army.

By a small majority the electors of the town of Lucerne decided last Sunday to reduce their municipal council from 60 to 40 members.

While in charge of a mowing machine, drawn by two horses, Aug. Gauthey, of Arnax (near Orbe), was struck by lightning and killed on the spot, as well as one of the horses.

Col. Karl Egli died on Thursday (June 11th) in Zurich at the age of 60. He was an extremely capable, though not very popular officer, who for over thirty years was a prominent figure in the Swiss army. Col. Egli is best remembered from the officers' affair in 1916, which put an end to his military career.

Motor accidents at level crossings are of almost weekly occurrence. Near Sonceboz a car ran into a train which had just emerged from the tunnel at Tournedos, the gates having been left open. Luckily the two occupants, the watch manufacturer Muller and his son, from Malleray, escaped with slight injuries; the car, however, was completely destroyed.

The body of Joh. Landdorf, of Geneva, was found on Friday (June 12th) by a shepherd in the neighbourhood of Lovenax. The veteran alpinist, who is 75 years old and a member of the Swiss Alpine Club, had been missing since the previous Monday, and it is surmised that he died from exhaustion and subsequent exposure.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Die Wasserkraftwerke der Schweiz. — Die Ausnützung der Wasserkraft im Schweizerland machte, begünstigt durch die Kriegserfahrungen, in den Nachkriegsjahren grosse Fortschritte. Für den Laien und auch oft für den Fachmann ist es recht schwierig, ein zusammenfassendes Bild zu bekommen über die heutige Ausnützung des Wasserkraftreichtums der Schweiz. Dieser wird auf 6 bis 8 Millionen PS geschätzt. Davon stehen heute erst 1.6 Millionen im Dienste unserer Volkswirtschaft. Die Aufgabe der völligen Ausnützung dieses ungehobenen Schatzes ist freilich recht gross und ihre Lösung sehr kostspielig, haben sich doch die Baukosten für eine Wasserkraftanlage seit dem

Krieg um das anderthalbfache vermehrt. Doch an der Lösung dieser Aufgabe der Nutzbarmachung der schweizerischen Wasserkraft darf nicht verzweifelt werden. Was auf diesem Gebiete seit den achtziger Jahren bis heute geleistet wurde und was in den nächsten Jahren noch geleistet werden soll, stellt ein soeben vom schweizerischen Wasserwirtschaftsverband in Zürich herausgegebenes handliches, aufs schönste ausgestattetes Werk dar. Es führt den Titel "Wasserkraftwerke der Schweiz." In dem prächtigen Werk gibt eingangs der Sekretär des schweizerischen Wasserwirtschaftsverbandes in Zürich, Herr Ingenieur A. Härry, einen sehr hübschen und übersichtlichen Ueberblick über die wasser- und energiewirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse der Schweiz. Sämtliche Probleme der schweizerischen Wasserwirtschaft finden hier eine kurze textliche und zahlenmässige Darstellung. Es folgt ein Verzeichnis derjenigen Kraftwerke, die vor dem Jahr 1885 erstellt worden sind. Es sind ihrer kaum drei Dutzend. Elf Seiten dagegen nimmt die Tabelle der Kraftwerke ein, die seit dem Jahre 1886 zur Erstellung gelangten. Diese elf Seiten stellen ein Stück schweizerischer Wirtschaftsgeschichte dar, wie es eindrucklicher in solch kleinem Umfang nicht geschrieben werden könnte. Das Jahr, welches den Rekord in der Erschliessung der Wasserkraft sah, war 1922, wo 114,800 PS neu der Volkswirtschaft zur Verfügung gestellt wurden durch Eröffnung der grossen Kraftwerke von Broc, Amsteg, Klosters-Küblis und Mühleberg. Eine Tabelle der im Bau sich befindlichen Anlagen zeigt, dass in diesem und den nächsten Jahren nach eine stattliche Zahl Pferdestärken neu nutzbar gemacht werden sollen. Ausserdem befinden sich aber noch 15 weitere Kraftwerksprojekte im Studium. Auch darüber orientiert kurz eine Tabelle. Die Daten der 278 Kraftwerke der Schweiz, die Energie an Dritte abgeben oder einen Ausbau von über 500 PS besitzen, sind auf 16 Seiten übersichtlich und erschöpfend zusammengestellt. Was das Buch aber besonders wertvoll macht, sind die ausgezeichnet illustrierten technisch-wirtschaftlichen Beschreibungen der schweizerischen Wasserkraftwerke mit 1000 und mehr PS installierter Nettoleistung. Diese Beschreibungen sind auf den neuesten Stand gebracht und umfassen auch Werke, von denen erst die Pläne vorhanden sind. Beim Durchblättern all dieser aufschlussreichen Seiten wird dem Beschauer erst klar, was die schweizerische Ingenieurkunst in den letzten Jahren alles geschaffen hat. Die kleineren Wasserkraftwerke, die über unser ganzes Land verstreut, aber zum Teil leider veraltet sind, treten immer mehr zurück. Man hat gelernt, dass auch hier Einigkeit stark macht, und Werke geschaffen, die nicht mehr von Einzelnen finanziert werden können, ja kaum mehr von Gemeinden und einzelnen Kantonen, sondern von Bundesbetrieben oder von verschiedenen Kantonen zusammen. Diese mächtigen Hochdruckwerke mit Stausen, die dazu dienen müssen, die Kraftzeugung von den heutigen grossen Schwankungen zu befreien, sind gewaltige Unternehmungen, die hunderte von Millionen kosten und deren Bau die Ingenieurkunst vor grosse Aufgaben stellen. Einige dieser Werke sind bereits gebaut, für andere liegen baureife Projekte vor. Ueber beide Gruppen orientiert erschöpfend die neueste Publikation der schweizerischen Wasserwirtschaftsverbandes, der als willkommene Beigabe noch eine Karte der Verbindungsleitungen der schweizerischen Elektrizitätswerke beiliegt. So bildet das schöne Werk ein Dokument schweizerischer Energie und gibt ein aufschlussreiches Bild des Könnens und Schaffens unserer Ingenieure und Techniker. (Nat.-Ztg.)

Des Hodler au rabais. — L'Office des poursuites de Genève faisait vendre aux enchères publiques, samedi matin, quelques dessins de Hodler. Ils n'ont point tant s'en faut, atteint de gros prix.

Un très beau dessin, de grandes dimensions, 'Le Tambour,' a fait 400 francs sur estimation de 1000 francs. Une étude au crayon pour un personnage de l' 'Unanimité,' estimée 250 francs, a été vendue 80 francs; un autre dessin, représentant une tête de femme, qui était également estimé 250 francs, n'a fait que 50 francs.

Dans cette vente était comprise aussi une plaque de marbre qui fut une table de café et sur laquelle Hodler, tout en buvant un verre de fendant, avait crayonné des portraits-charges de quelques-uns de ses amis, dont le regretté Félix Vibert. Cette table passait pour précieuse. On l'avait fait recouvrir d'une glace protectrice et elle fut longtemps l'une des curiosités d'un café de Genève aimé des peintres. Estimée 2000 francs, elle a été adjugée, faute de plus haute enchère, à 120 francs. (Gazette de Lausanne)

Ce que coûte un soldat — L'équipement complet d'une recrue coûte à la Confédération fr. 287 à

fr. 400, suivant l'arme, à laquelle elle appartenait. Les soldats les plus chers sont les cyclistes et motocyclistes et ceux dont l'équipement coûte le moins sont — qui l'eût cru, — les cavaliers, qu'ils soient dragons ou mitrailleurs. Le simple fusilier coûte fr. 350,60 et le carabinier 50 centimes de plus.

Le tarif de l'habillement et de l'équipement des recrues est basé sur un devis détaillé. Mais les prix des matières premières, notamment de la laine étant encore soumis à certaines fluctuations, le tarif ne peut, cette année encore, être établi qu'à titre provisoire. Bien que les prix de la laine brute soient de nouveau montés depuis l'année dernière, la plupart des nombres de l'Union suisse des fabricants se sont déclarés disposés à livrer aux anciens prix, à condition qu'entre temps la laine ne subisse pas une nouvelle hausse.

Le drap pour les tuniques revient actuellement à fr. 19.55 le mètre (fr. 11.10 avant la mobilisation) et celui pour les pantalons à fr. 16.85 (10.60).

(Démocrate.)

La vraie "Joconde" serait à Montreux. — Un amateur d'art, le marquis d'Oyley, déclare dans le 'Matin' avoir découvert à Montreux un portrait, qu'il attribue à Luini, et qui serait le véritable portrait de Monna Lisa, épouse de François del Giocondo. Cette oeuvre d'art est la propriété de M. Cuénod, épouse de M. M. Cuénod, banquier, vice-consul de Grande-Bretagne à Montreux. Ce portrait, qui porte au dos le nom de "Joconda," a été acquis en 1817 à Edimbourg, pour le prix de 3000 guinées, par l'arrière-grand-père de Mme. Cuénod, un Irlandais du nom de Muiror.

D'après nos informations, il est impossible pour le moment de se prononcer sur l'origine du portrait, qui se trouve effectivement aux mains de Mme. Cuénod. Ce qui est certain, c'est qu'il s'agit d'une oeuvre fort belle, qui, en 1914, fut restauré par le professeur Bode, de Berlin.

Espérons qu'une expertise confiée à des spécialistes compétents nous donnera le mot de cette énigme, qui présente un vif intérêt pour l'histoire de l'art. (Gazette de Lausanne.)

La charité exploitée. — Avant hier, une automobile venant de France s'arrêtait devant la porte d'un hôpital de notre pays. Deux dames en descendant et se présentant au bureau du directeur, elles annonçaient qu'elles accompagnaient une femme victime d'un grave accident, d'où elle était sortie avec une jambe cassée. Le directeur s'en fut voir la malade restée plus ou moins confortablement étendue dans l'auto. Elle lui parut en effet pâlotte et, vu son état, digne d'être reçue d'urgence dans la maison de charité. Elle était d'ailleurs originaire du pays. On la transporta donc dans la salle de la section chirurgicale.

A ce moment les deux accompagnatrices s'étaient déjà installées dans l'automobile et filaient à allure très rapide vers la frontière.

Le médecin vint quelque peu plus tard faire sa visite et il s'intéressa naturellement au sort de la nouvelle venue et il constata non sans quelque surprise hilarante que la grave accident de la patiente lui avait brisé une... jambe de bois! La découverte provoqua naturellement une crise de gaité qu'on dit avoir été d'une heureuse influence sur la santé de tous les pensionnaires de la maison. (Jura.)

Betrachtungen eines Amerika-Schweizers. — Ein Berner in St. Louis schreibt uns: "Ich las in letzter Zeit viel von Klagen über allzu hohe Steuern in der Schweiz und namentlich in Bern. Ein Freund, dem ich kürzlich über Heimweh klagte, schrieb mir zurück: "Mit den Heimerinnerungen hat es einen Haken, dass darin nur das Schöne vorkommt und nichts von 4,5% Staats- und 5,5% Gemeinde- nebst anderen Ergänzungssteuern." Wenn man die Steuern von hier mit denjenigen von Bern vergleicht, so wird jedermann einsehen, welch grosser Unterschied besteht, man kann ruhig sagen, in meiner alten Vaterstadt seien dieselben zwanzigmal grösser als hier. Ein Verheirateter mit 2000 dollar oder 10.000 Fr. Jahreseinkommen zahlt hier gar keine Steuern, und ein Lediger für denselben Betrag 25 Dollar oder rund 130 Fr. Man vergegenwärtige sich, dass allein die eidgenössische Militärsteuer, die jeder Schweizer auch im Auslande zahlen muss, einen grösseren Betrag ausmacht, als die Gesamtsteuer für die Vereinigten Staaten!

Erstens zahlt man also hier bedeutend weniger Steuern, und zweitens verdient man mehr, wie meine eigene Erfahrung mich lehrte. Aus diesen Gründen ist es nur zu sehr zu begreifen, dass wir Schweizer, die wir hier sind, nicht ein allzu grosses Verlangen haben, wieder zurückzukehren, und dass gerne Tausende von andern uns folgen möchten, die Vereinigten Staaten aber jährlich nur wenig mehr als 2000 in der Schweiz geborene Personen

einwandern lassen. Ich, der ich wie viele andere zum Auswandern gezwungen worden bin, weil ich keine Stelle in Europa finden konnte, kann mich glücklich schätzen, hier in besseren Verhältnissen zu leben, wo man 'Aussichten hat, vorwärts zu kommen, und wo persönliche Tüchtigkeit bezahlt wird. Ich hoffe nur, dass bald wieder wesentlich bessere Verhältnisse in der Schweiz eintreten und damit all die Klagen über Steuern usw. aus den Spalten der Zeitungen verschwinden werden."

(*Berner Tagblatt.*)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Pure Food Agreement.

Birmingham Post (4th June):—

A drastic regulation against the importation of tainted edible fats has just come into force. For the past twelve months foreign countries have been warned that the British Government intended to take action. The chief call for the new regulation was the action of some Dutch firms who bought condemned carcasses in the United States, and sent to England lard and dripping extracted from them. It is now made a definite offence to import any article of food which has at any stage in its preparation been condemned in another country. Further, no fats in this category may be imported except from the eight countries with whom Great Britain has negotiated a standard agreement for inspection and marking. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, Denmark, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland have come into line. Holland is the only large supplier of edible fats to the British market which has not conformed.

The inference is obvious!

Vienna Cotton Congress.

Morning Post (5th June):—

The International Cotton Congress was opened on June 4th in the Industriehaus, on the Schwarzenberg Platz. Delegates from twenty-one countries were present. Germany was readmitted to membership of the Federation this year, and representatives of that country were welcomed officially by the President of the Congress, Mr. Arthur Kuffler, of Austria, and Mr. J. Syz, of Zurich, Switzerland, President of the Federation. Mr. Kuffler, in his address, remarked that their work had been of incalculable benefit to the world's textile industry.

Mr. Syz referred to the great advance which had been made in the direction of establishing international courts of arbitration, and to the American cotton crop reports of Mr. Arno S. Pearce, Secretary of the Federation. In view of the success of the two previous missions to the United States, the Committee, he added, had decided to ask Mr. Pearce to pay another visit to the American cotton belt next month.

Mr. Taylor (England), Solicitor to the International Federation, said his committee had decided in favour of arbitration courts, and Associations had been requested to appoint a panel of arbitrators in each country with a view to effecting the most efficient, expeditious and economical settlement of disputes, thereby avoiding the slow and expensive process of the Law Courts. This international agreement would be of general benefit to the trading world.

The delegates agreed to the proposed rules of arbitration, and steps are to be taken to secure their acceptance by spinners, manufacturers, merchants and shippers.

The members afterwards attended an exhibition of cotton machinery at the Technical College.

The Servant Problem in Switzerland.

Sunday School Chronicle (4th June):—

One had thought that the chief sufferer from the shortage of domestic servants was in all countries the middle-class housewife who has to maintain a certain standard of living, do her own housework, cooking and cleaning, and yet take the children out daily. But there are other sufferers. For instance, an old Swiss hotel proprietor, over seventy years of age, who now runs a small Pension. "Naboth," as he is generally called by English visitors because of the flourishing vineyard which surrounds the Pension, is sometimes left with his house of twenty or twenty-five guests and only one small servant girl who, having never read the "Old Curiosity Shop," rejoices in her nickname of 'Marchioness.' She remains, whoever else may go. And upon these two, and the old wife, crippled by rheumatism, the whole work of the Pension, with about thirty bedrooms, devolves. When some of the guests complain of the continual changing of maids and the intervals between the goings and comings, when rooms are unswep and water-jugs unfilled, "Naboth" wrings his hands in despair. He produces the list published by the Hotel Bureau at Basle, showing the large number of kitchen helps, *femmes de chambre*, chefs, etc., required by first-class hotels, where conditions of work are interesting and tips from wealthy tourists may be expected. How, therefore, can he, running a small Pension for those with slender purses, compete with them!

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In one day's list alone 203 chefs de cuisine, 74 receptionists, 21 secretaries, 201 chambermaids, and so on, were needed until the number of hotel employees required amounted to 1,166. The supply of Swiss maids is certainly not enough to meet the demand. One would not, of course, advise that English girls should accept situations abroad, even from the books of a reliable Bureau, without full investigation, but those who are abroad for a holiday and hear of a vacancy which they can investigate on the spot might find the work in entirely new surroundings not congenial for a time. One thing is certain: unemployment is not the ever-present bugbear in Continental towns that it is in our own country. But it cannot be said that the wages offered are very attractive. Experienced shorthand-typists, for instance, in Paris are often expected to work for 600 francs a month (little more than 30s. a week at the present rate of exchange). There is always, too, the difficulty of inquiring into the *bona fides* of a situation, unless one is actually on the spot.

Which reminds me that Mrs. "Kyburg" is anxiously looking out for a maid, and if any reader knows of a likely young girl, he will do us a real service by letting "Kyburg" know.

In these days of heat wave it is quite refreshing to read of the snow and ice on the Swiss Alps, and a line like the following (*Daily Express*, 5th June) is bound to attract our attention:—

Soldiers of the Snow.

The long winter vigil of the "Soldiers of the Snow"—the official title of a small band of young men who watch for lost travellers in the mountain passes—has come to an end. The snow has melted, and the traffic route through the St. Bernard Pass is now open.

The "Soldiers of the Snow" are young Italians who live in the little village of St. Remy, on the Italian side of the pass. They enjoy the ancient privilege of being exempted from military service, even in time of war, on condition that they aid lost or distressed travellers on the mountain passes.

The Duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel I., passed this law of military exemption for the men of St. Remy a century ago. It has not been altered since. When they have reached the military age, the young men are supplied with uniforms to distinguish them from smugglers, but they receive no rifles.

The "Soldiers of the Snow" do the same duties as the monks at the hospice, with whom they are in constant communication by telephone. Thus, in the long nine-months' winter, both the Swiss and Italian slopes of the pass are watched for strayed travellers, hundreds of whom have been saved in past years from a lingering death in the snow.

In *The Times* (16th June) I read that violent thunderstorms have played havoc with some parts of Switzerland, especially the Vaud and Berne, and that much damage has been caused, no less than eleven farms being struck by lightning and burnt down. And over here we are by now almost praying for a storm to cool the air a bit and revive our fast flagging energy. Watering the flowers of an evening has its charms, but, all nice things, taken too often makes one feel a bit *blasé*!

There is nearly always something very interesting to be found in *Nature*. No, my dear Hans, I am not thinking or writing of the bathing belles who now attract people to the sea-side and who are making the beach such a gaily coloured and lively resort. I am, or rather I was, going to write about *Nature*, the publication, and quite a serious one at that. Well—if only I could now quickly regain my power of concentrating on the task of writing these "Notes"—but . . . Well, anyhow, *Nature* (6th June) writes about the—

Effect of High-Tension Electric Fields upon the Discharge of Locomotive Gases.

Owing to the simultaneous use of steam and electricity on the Swiss railways during the process of gradual electrification, a curious physical phenomenon is seen when the mixture of smoke and vapour from a steam locomotive comes within the electric field produced by the overhead conductors, which operate at a pressure of 15,000 volts, and a periodicity of 17 per second.

Under certain conditions the smoke and steam particles are seen to be in violent agitation, very

rapid and rhythmical. The phenomenon is not readily observed, the special conditions requisite for its production being realised only on rare occasions. It is not observable in the compact white clouds sent out by a heavily loaded locomotive, nor during the emission of dark smoke just after firing; neither is it seen during the heavy discharge from a locomotive while starting a train. The most favourable conditions appear to occur during periods of minimum discharge of steam and smoke, when the singular palpitation suddenly appears and just as quickly disappears.

Owing to the fugitive nature of the phenomenon it is difficult to count the number of the palpitations, but they are certainly of the same order as the alternations in electric tension. This and the requisite attenuation of the water droplets seem to indicate an essentially electric origin for the phenomenon. On the other hand, it is evident that the appearance is in no way connected with electrical discharge of the kind frequently seen between clouds in a thunderstorm, because the palpitation is invisible at night.

During the day-time the palpitation is seen most clearly when the discharge from the locomotive appears "dark grey" against a bright background of sky, or when it appears as a white cloud against an overcast sky. Both these conditions point to an alteration in opacity and, correlatively, an albedo of the cloud mass, caused by a series of alternate condensations and re-evaporations occurring in synchronism with the variations in electric field. Apparently, under certain conditions of saturation, a positive charge will favour the formation of drops, whereas a negative charge leads to their disappearance by evaporation in the warm gases.

In order to test the above explanation, I attempted an experimental laboratory verification, using a Klingelness induction coil which was controlled by a Roget helix dipping in mercury, and breaking the circuit 10 or 12 times per second. The pressure at the terminals reached about 40,000 volts. The spark gap plate was extended by a metal rod, extending to within a few centimetres of a narrow orifice, through which issued a jet of water vapour from a small boiler. The boiler was heated electrically in order to avoid the production of disturbing ions through combustion.

The steam remained almost invisible so long as the induction coil remained inoperative, but as soon as the helix interrupter was started and the intermittent electric field established around the metallic rod, the appearance of the steam jet changed, its visibility fluctuating in synchronism with the dipping of the Roget interrupter and with the polarity of the electric field. When the vertical rod was positively electrified the phenomenon was strongly marked, but when the conductor was charged negatively the results were not readily observable.

Although this simple experiment did not reproduce fully the conditions obtaining on the electric railway, it illustrates and corroborates the hypothesis of the alternate condensations and rarefactions being caused by the alternating electric field.

And if any of my dear readers have not quite understood or grasped the above, I would advise them to read it all over again! It's just the sort of thing to do on a very hot afternoon, when lunch, with its delicious cooling—beetroot salads (you thought I was alluding to something less solid, now, did you not?) is over and it is still too early to ask for tea.

Well, well. Another few weeks, and we shall all be wondering again whether it can ever be dry and warm in this country. So let us cheer up and make the best of it while it lasts.

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