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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The last session of the two Houses of Parliament, previous to the re-election of their members, opened last Monday, Sept. 21st. In the National Council several written replies were submitted to questions previously addressed to the Federal Council: one of these dealt with the military exemption tax of Swiss residing abroad. It was stated that, although a Swiss may have been naturalized in the country of his adoption, any tax to which he had made himself previously liable would be recoverable as soon as he set foot on Swiss soil.

Dr. Alfred Stooss, the President of the Federal Tribunal in Lausanne, died last Sunday (Sept. 20) in that town at the age of 65; for some considerable time he had been suffering from pulmonary trouble. Dr. Stooss was a scion of an old Bernese family and, a lawyer by profession, has been a member of the Federal Tribunal since 1905. He never took an active part in politics, but was a talented musician and an enthusiastic chess player.

Passports cannot under present conditions be abolished—this is the unanimous recommendation of the cantonal police commissioners at a recent conference. The visum regulations may in the near future be modified in so far that foreign tourists and possibly commercial travellers may enter Switzerland without first securing this permit. For those seeking employment the visum will be retained for the protection of home labour; the cantons, however, will enjoy a certain latitude according to local conditions, where in certain trades the influx of some foreign labour may be desirable. This applies chiefly to hotel staff during the season and domestic servants, for whom there is a constant strong demand.

A "friendship" treaty has been concluded between Turkey and Switzerland, but no statements have been issued as to the meaning or effects of this "entente."

Instead of a budgetted deficit of 2.6 million francs, the accounts for 1924 of the Berne municipality close with a surplus of about Frs. 160,000.

According to statistics compiled by the Zurich municipality, the number of children attending public schools is showing a constant decrease. In the year 1914 the number was about 26,000; it is now 18,800, and is expected to fall to 16,000 in 1931.

In order suitably to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of its foundation which the Suchard chocolate concern is celebrating next year, three prizes of Frs. 2,500, Frs. 1,500 and Frs. 1,000 are offered to Swiss artists for the best design of a poster; the competition closes on November 1st next.

State Councillor Dr. Adalbert Wirz died in Sarnen at the age of 77. He has been a member of the Ständerat ever since 1901; in his native canton he has, for the last 50 years, been a leading figure, occupying in turn different civic offices and presiding during four years as Landammann of Obwalden. He was the recognised leader of the Conservative-Catholics and a staunch supporter of the re-introduction of compulsory religious teaching in public schools.

A terrible motor accident happened on Wednesday (Sept. 16th) early in the afternoon on the Furka road just below the Hotel Belvedere. In an attempt to negotiate the second curve, a large Fiat car went over the edge and fell on the road below. All the occupants were killed on the spot. They are: Dr. Grob-Conradin, a well-known oculist of Chur, who was in charge of the car; Mrs. Grob, his wife; Dr. Plazidus Plattner, another medical practitioner at Chur; and Mrs. Hanna Lichtenhahn-Brenner, the wife of Dr. Lichtenhahn, the latter being able to jump off in time and thus escape without injury.

Another accident due to a similar cause occurred on the road from Locarno to Bellinzona, the victim being Mr. A. Berti, of 3, Stroud Green Road, Finsbury Park, London, N.4, who is spend-

ing his holiday in his native canton. He was transported to the hospital in Bellinzona in a serious condition, but is now reported to be out of danger.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### Geneva.

Last week I commented upon the multitude and variety of articles in the English press which profess to describe the social and intellectual life of Geneva in the past and present; here is another contribution in a lighter vein, taken from the *Evening Standard* (Sept. 16th):—

Smug, self-satisfied little Geneva! How exactly like her to get herself cast as scenese for this gigantic international circus called the League of Nations.

She has become a sort of patchwork quilt of races, of every shade—temperamentally as well as physically—of white, black, yellow, and brown. Fifty-four nations of them—not counting the onlookers. . . . Each with their own already sharp little axes to grind, each with their own little needs, likes, prejudices, hatreds to serve.

What is the mysterious element that gets added to those ingredients, up in the League's City by the lake? The thing that makes the whole so infinitely much bigger than the sum of its parts? The accomplishment so immeasurably much better than the sum of its efforts?

*Dieu sait.* But there is something. One of the queerest things about the League of Nations is the way in which it grips the people who come into its atmosphere—even when they came especially to laugh.

Some day, of course, it is going to realise that its best work will be done without the circus accessories. Then the General Assemblies with their galaxies of political headlines will disappear. The permanent delegations will settle down to untangling the knots in international relationships, perhaps no more earnestly, but because of their very unobtrusiveness with a better chance nevertheless. And Geneva will cease to be one of the "chic" resorts for those who have no earthly business there.

Just at present, however, the League's great preoccupation is the necessity of what the Americans call "selling the idea" of herself to five continents of an onlooking world.

And, accordingly, the music of Geneva is the music of the typewriter, and her voice that of the press-agent. The army of 275 journalists that garrisons the town is regarded as her chiefest treasure . . . sought out for honours, and overwhelmed with many different kinds of free information.

Accordingly there is a feverish coming and going of celebrities; it is impossible to get a sleeper on the night express; and there is not an hotel in Geneva with an empty room . . .

Delegations are being accommodated in the reception rooms, plain and fancy tourists are sleeping on camp beds in the *salles de bain*, and well-known novelists in search of 'atmosphere' are weaving words in converted store-rooms up in the attics.

The fascinating game of celebrity-scalp hunting has reached such proportions that if you go into a restaurant and are greeted at all effusively by the head waiter, you will eat your meal under a battery of gimlet eyes, while arguments rage as to your identity—and in the end some bold soul asks for your autograph in order to settle the point once and for all.

Every hotel in Geneva obligingly flies the flags of the delegations in residence, so that the curious may know exactly where to wait, in the morning, for the exodus of the statesmen they have marked down as the sights for the day. And that floating population of charming people who are seen at Ascot and the Grand Prix, spend August at Deauville, late September in Biarritz, January on the Riviera, and—now—Assembly time in Geneva, make unheard-of efforts to put up at the same hostelry as their country's official representatives.

Incredible are the ruses adopted to obtain a ticket to the Assembly Hall on the big occasions . . . and no mandatory question more successfully strains diplomatic relations than the impossibility of fitting fifteen important personages who really need not be in Geneva at all into one and the same seat.

As someone remarked the other day in the lobby of the secretariat (the only room in the world where you can see so many famous people at the same time), "If ever the League gets

really short of cash, they have only to build a large auditorium containing several thousand seats, around the new Assembly Hall—and charge a pound admission. They would make a fortune."

Probably there are times when the delegates, sitting each among their national flock, in neat rows going lengthways or crossways of the Assembly Hall, and obliged to listen to every speech first in French and then (through an interpreter) in English—or first in English and then (through an interpreter) in French—wonder what on earth can be the attraction about their deliberations. There are certainly times when the two hundred and seventy-five journalists—who have all been provided with copies of practically every speech, in both languages, beforehand—look around on the packed and breathless public galleries and wonder it too . . .

But there is all the difference in the world between listening to the same speech twice over because you have to, and doing the same thing purely of your own free will. . . . (Add, of course, the hope that one day one of the interpreters will make a bad slip; and the natural desire to be "there"—then.)

This year one big difference is noticeable about the City by the Lake. . . . For the first time the whole thing, the League and all it represents, is being accepted as an established and permanent institution. It has at last, once and for all, stepped out of the freak class. Impossible to define the subtlety in which the change consists. . . . It is just there—like the crowd!

A strange thing, really, the consummation of this dream that was dreamed by the third Napoleon, and realised by a college professor from across the Atlantic. It almost needs to be seen to be believed—certainly it needs to be seen to be realised . . . which, I suppose, means still more tourists for Geneva!

### Swiss Rhapsody.

A delightful little record of a first visit to the Ticino has been contributed by a fair pilgrim to the *Clarion* (Sept. 11th); its freshness and *naïveté* of conception is quite exhilarating:—

I had no idea that Switzerland was such a beautiful and engrossing country. Switzerland I had always imagined—whenever I vouchsafed it a thought at all—to be a land of barefaced mountains whereto certain folk of incomprehensible taste resorted in winter to skate on ice and toboggan down slopes. What breath-taking surprises were in store!

The whole summer-time journey from Basle was one of such varied beauty that, like a small child tremblingly opening parcels at Christmas-time, one was kept in a constant state of excitement and enthusiasm. Is there another country of its size in the world which can cram so much entertainment into so small a space?

What manner of people are these Swiss who can conjure up such magic in their house-building and so much cunning in their flower-decorations? Never have I seen a flower hold such flaming, undisputed sway as the beloved scarlet geranium does in Switzerland. Should the sun ever choose to go on holiday at the wrong time of the year, I think that the red geranium might quite easily accomplish the melting of the mountain snows without his help.

And if there be mountains that can turn my heart away for one single moment from the kindly, human valley and the eloquent reassuring sweep of meadow-land, then the heights of Switzerland may accomplish it.

But you, you poor enthusiasts over Snowdonia, may keep your scowling Welsh variety, for I have discovered mountains that do not chill the spine—mountains with friendly, green, smiling faces and unaggressive demeanour. Mountains that stand gaily in the sunshine and a bright clear air and do not woo cold, wet mists with black looks and sinister eyes!

In the late evening we were afforded a glimpse of loveliness so disturbing, so seductive, that it seemed as though some mocking hand had deliberately thrown the scene into our path in order to provoke in us an insistent and unsatisfied longing.

We were standing on the starboard side of the train, drinking in the cool, soft air of the evening, when suddenly, gazing down through the close, screening trees and the darkness, we espied lights dotted here and there. Lights that danced and twinkled and lit up something now and again that shimmered—moved. Water!

"Maggiore!" we cried. Maggiore in the twilight. At the feet of luxuriantly-clad hills of