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HOME NEWS

The Federal Council has instructed the Swiss Minister in Rome to make representations in the proper quarters against the references in the official handbook on Fascism which describe the Ticino and certain districts of the Grisons as parts of Italy not yet liberated.

Dr. C. D. Bourcart, who at one time was Swiss Minister in London and who retired from the diplomatic service at the beginning of this year, has been appointed president of the special commission created under the Danish-Swedish Conciliation Treaty.

An important decision affecting trade unions in Switzerland has just been given by the Federal Tribunal at Lausanne. A Biel factory employed amongst its staff a non-unionist, and in order to force the recalcitrant worker into the union, the local branch of the Swiss watch and metal workers syndicate threatened a general strike unless he was dismissed. They gained the day, but on the appeal to the Federal Tribunal the latter declared that the syndicate was liable to indemnify the non-unionist for the pecuniary loss he had suffered through the forced dismissal.

A considerable reduction in the rates of the Zurich municipality has taken place. Whilst in the critical after-war years the communal tax was fixed at 160 per cent. of the state tax, it has gradually been reduced, and for 1926 a rate of 100 per cent. is proposed.

An amusement tax is one of the fiscal proposals in the canton of Thurgau.

Considerable damage was occasioned by a fire which broke out in a barn at Staad, near Ermattingen (Thurgau) and which communicated itself to adjoining buildings, including the "Gasthof zur Seeschau." The fire brigade from Konstanz with their motor engine assisted in extinguishing the flames.

Hale in body and soul, Mr. Niklaus Rohner, of Wangs, near Sargans (St. Gall) is celebrating next Sunday his hundredth birthday; another centenarian in the same canton is the "Wurzenbethli," of Mels.

For intentionally shooting and killing another workman last September, the criminal court of Aargau has sentenced Friedr. Zinniker, of Strenzelbach, to five years hard labour.

Supposed to have lost his foothold on the slippery ground, Rudolf Gubler, a saddler of Grenzen (Solothurn), was found dead on the "Stierenberg," where he had gone on an excursion.

Caught by a train when passing in his car an open level crossing between Sauges and Vuamarcus, Mr. Guinand, a Neuchâtel lawyer, suffered serious injury, whilst his wife and chauffeur escaped with slight bruises.

Ignoring "safety first," Franz Joseph Wermerlinger, a Bernese business man, was run over by a local motor-bus and killed on the spot.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

La peau d'Urs—Il y aura en décembre, à Berne, deux exécutions capitales... dans la fosse aux ours. On y abbatra, en effet, une femelle d'un âge avancé, de même que l'Urs, le fameux "combourgeois" prêté par Soleure auquel il avait été légué par le sculpteur Eggenschwyler.

Les Soleurois, cependant ont rappelé aux Bernois que la peau d'Urs devait leur revenir. Ils comptent, en effet, empêiller la bête qui prendra place dans leur musée où il coûtera moins cher à nourrir que lorsqu'il était vivant. Gravement, le Conseil municipal de Soleure a délibéré sur cette question d'ours et l'on a envoyé aux autorités de Berne une non moins grave missive officielle, leur

rappelant qu'Urs avait été prêté seulement et que sa peau devait faire retour à Soleure...

Les Bernois, bons diables, se sont inclinés!

(*La Tribune de Genève*)

Un baptême à l'eau froide—Les promeneurs, assez nombreux en dépit du temps gris, du ciel bas, d'une température glaciaire, qui se trouvaient samedi après-midi sur les rives du lac, au bas du chemin des Bains, ont été les témoins plutôt amusés d'une scène peu banale un baptême dans les eaux du Léman. Une trentaine de fidèles y assistaient, accompagnant de leurs cantiques les diverses phases de la cérémonie. La petite cabane en tôle ondulée jouxtant à l'est de l'établissement de bains servait de vestiaire... non chauffé. Trois néophytes devaient recevoir le baptême. Le pasteur prononça une allocution soulignant le caractère du baptême, symbole de purification, puis il entra dans l'eau, tout vêtu, tête découverte, jusqu'à mi-cuisses, en tenant par la main le premier des néophytes, également vêtu; puis subitement il le renversa en arrière dans l'eau jusqu'à complète immersion. L'autre ressortit en s'ébrouant, puis fut introduit dans la cabane, sans doute pour se débarrasser de ses vêtements mouillés et revêtir des habits secs. Même scène avec le second, puis avec le troisième néophyte...

(*La Tribune*)

Eine hübsche Tiergeschichte, die sich im Toggenburg zugetragen hat, wird im "Volksfreund" erzählt.

Ein Bauer wollte möglichst früh Küchlein haben, aber keine Henne zeigte sich brutlustig. Der Mann, nicht arm an Einfällen, legte acht befürchtete Hühner einer Täubin unter, die Bruttrieb zeigte. Die Taubenmutter brütete die Eier geduldig aus, wollte dann aber von ihren etwas gross geratenen Stieffeldern nichts mehr wissen und stieß sie mit dem Schnabel unbarmherzig weg, wenn sie bei ihr Wärme suchen wollten. Was nun tun? Der Bauer hatte eine grosse Angorakatze, die träge zusammengerollt in einem Korb lag. Welcher Einfall! Hier wäre Wärme, hier wäre vielleicht eine liebevolle Mutter. Flugs holt er die armen verwaisten Hühnchen, legt sie in den Korb zur weichhaargen "Mizzi" und wartet der Dinge, die da kommen werden. Die Katze beschuppt zuerst die federartigen "Büsi," nimmt sich dann aber ohne weiteres der frrierenden Hennenkinder müttlerich an, wärmt sie, spielt mit ihnen wie mit ihren eigenen Kindern und teilt mit ihnen das Nachtlager. Jeden Tag fressen Vier- und Zweibeiner aus dem gleichen Napf und schlafen einträchtig miteinander. Klettern die Kleinen an der Alten herum und verkriechen sich in ihren Haaren, so fängt sie gemütlich an zu spulen. Jetzt sind alle acht schon gross; niemand würde den angehenden Eierlegerinnen ansehen, dass sie ihr Leben einem sonst blutigeren Vogelmörder verdanken. Der Bauer zeigte mir voll Stolz das photographische Bild dieser fröhlichen Gesellschaft, wie sich die Katze auf dem Vorplatz gemütlich ausgestreckt sonnt, und der eine Teil ihrer Pflegekinder zwischen ihren Beinen schläft, während die andern sich behaglich von ihrem Rücken aus schauen.

(*Nat.-Ztg.*)

Schmugglerpech—Der Genfer Kommiss Julien A. hatte in Lyon ein neues Kleid gekauft. Er wollte sich auf der Heimfahrt im Kabinett des Zuges umkleiden, um den Zoll zu umgehen. Dabei warf er vom alten Kleid Stück um Stück zum Fenster hinaus, und als er sich ankleiden wollte, gewahrte er zu seinem Schrecken, dass man in Lyon vergriffen hatte, die Hosen einzupacken. In Genf musste er vor dem Aussteigen die Eisenbahngleise stellen um eine abgelegte Hose bitten, damit er aussteigen konnte. Die Geschichte wurde ruchbar, und der Mann wird nun doch seinen Zoll entrichten müssen.

Ungetreuer Kassier—Das Obergericht des Kantons Solothurn verurteilte den bereits fünfmal wegen Betruges verurteilten 31-jährigen ledigen Kassier-Buchhalter Christian Brönnimann, gebürtig aus dem Kanton Bern, wohnhaft gewesen in Olten, wegen neuer Beträgerien in sieben Fällen zu sechs Monaten Einsperrung, zu zwei Jahren Einstellung in den bürgerlichen Rechten und zum Schadensersatz. Der Verurteilte hatte als Angestellter der Hoch- und Tiefbaunternehmung Adolf Aecherli, Reiden, die in Olten ein Zweiggeschäft führt, von seinem Arbeitgeber unter verschiedenen Malen grössere Beträge unter dem Vorwand der Ausrichtung von Vorschüssen an die Arbeiter erhoben, im ganzen 986 Fr. Im weitern wusste er sich von einem Wirt und einem Bäcker in Olten ebenfalls unter betrügerischen Angaben mehrere Darlehen im Gesamtbetrag von 1750 Fr. zu verschaffen. Schliesslich fiel seine Buchführung dem Geschäftsherrn auf; eine Prüfung der Bücher und der Kasse ergab

die Gaunereien und führte zu einer Klage auf Unterschlagung. Vor Gericht war Brönnimann geständig. Er gab an, das Geld für sich und seine Geliebte verwendet zu haben. Für einen Teil des veruntreuten Geldes konnte er bereits Ersatz leisten, den Rest wird er noch zu beschaffen haben.

(*Nat.-Ztg.*)

Un annaliste neuchâtelois.—La Société neuchâteloise d'histoire et d'archéologie a procédé, samedi après-midi, à Fontaines, à l'inauguration d'une plaque, destiné à commémorer le souvenir du pasteur et annaliste Jonas Bovve. Il fut pasteur à Fontaines de 1705 à 1739, mais est surtout connu pour être l'auteur des cinq volumes des "Annales historiques du comté de Neuchâtel et de Valangin."

(*Gazette de Lausanne*.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Switzerland and the League.

The Times (25th Nov.):—

Sir,—May I venture, from a Swiss point of view, a comment upon a passage in Mr. Chamberlain's speech in the Commons on Nov. 18? Dealing with German objections to Article 16 of the League Covenant, the Foreign Secretary stated:—"No member can enter the League except with the same rights and the same obligations as every other member. I pause for a moment—perhaps it is hardly necessary—to say that there is a single possible exception afforded to Switzerland, because, I think, it is the seat of the League and for no other reason."

In our view, the exceptional position Mr. Chamberlain alluded to is caused by the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland. This neutrality, established by the free will of our people, recognised by the Great Powers at the Vienna Congress, and especially in the Paris Act of Nov. 20, 1815, and lately confirmed in Article 435 of the Versailles Treaty, is unalterable. The seat of the League is not (according to paragraph 2 of article 7 of the Covenant) Switzerland. That is a fundamental difference which seems rather essential for appreciating the special position of Switzerland within the League. Mr. Chamberlain and those for whom he speaks should not lose sight of the fact that the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland is in no way conditioned or affected by Geneva being at present the seat of the League of Nations.—J. Halperin, London Correspondent of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung."

I am sure we ought all to be very much indebted to Mr. Halperin for his timely letter to "The Times," because it cannot be too well known that our country, basing itself on previous Treaties and also owing to its determination, shown in a practical manner during the Great War, enjoys a privileged and especial position in the League.

Youth in Revolt.

Daily News (20th Nov.):—

Some replies have already been received to the questions which have been put by the Y.M.C.A. in 20 languages to the young all over the world in the hope of arriving at what is in their minds.

A number of the replies, as might be expected, are disconcertingly frank. For example, one member of a group of boys of Czechoslovakia, when asked, "Why do older boys go to church?" replied, tersely, "For the girls." Another reply was: "Because it is the will of their parents."

Some Swiss boys between 15 and 18 years of age were found to have very definite ideas on other countries. When asked what contribution was made to the life of the world by Great Britain, United States, France, Germany, and Japan, they replied in this way:—

Britain—Navy, commercial, size of possessions. U.S.A.—Business opportunities, money, initiative.

France—Operas, good cooking, styles of dress. Germany—Industrial organisations, religious thought.

Japan—Factories, strongest army in Asia, art. Switzerland, it appeared, led the way in "Intellectual and religious ideas."

Here are some replies to "What are the main obstacles to religion among boys you know?"

The mystery of religion.

Superstition.

Injustices of the church.

The clergy.

The obligation of going to church.

And here are some youthful ideas of God:—God is the Sovereign of the World. There is no God.

God is not the physical Being who directs and judges everything. Nature alone does that. God punishes everyone.

God will one day destroy the whole world. God has created men and breathed their soul into them.

Mr. Oliver McCowen, who is organising the inquiry, hopes that it will be possible, when all the thousands of replies have been analysed, to draw valuable conclusions.

"During the past few years," he told the Daily News, "I have travelled in nearly every country in Europe, and everywhere I find youth in revolt. Everywhere one finds the young refusing to accept the ideas or conventions of the old."

Mr. McCowen finds that one of the dominant ideas in the minds of the young is that peace—both international and industrial—is essential to the progress of humanity.

Let us hope that Mr. McCowen's findings, as mentioned in the last paragraph of the above, are really true. If the children now growing up really believe in Peace as a necessity, the signature of the Locarno Pact on Tuesday last will have yet greater significance.

Via Paris comes a story of a fierce—

Naval Battle on Lake Léman.

Daily Mail (23rd Nov.):—

The Swiss Navy is not, as many people think, a joke. It has just fought and won a desperate battle against pirates on the Lake of Geneva.

The action arose out of a frontier incident on the line dividing the waters of the lake between France and Switzerland. A French fishing-boat from Thonon-les-Bains was fishing at the lines it had laid down to capture the delicate lake trout, when it was pounced upon by a fast Swiss mosquito craft, a motor-boat, whose rôle is to prevent poaching in the Swiss waters.

The Swiss sailors claimed that the French boat was in Swiss waters, and casting grappling irons aboard the French craft, they proceeded to board it, revolver in hand.

The Frenchmen were outnumbered and unarmed, but they seized oars and gaffs and resisted desperately until they were overpowered. The Swiss warship finally towed its prize into the port of Vevey, where the two members of the crew of the French vessel were lodged in gaol.

This naval dispute is to be settled through diplomatic channels.

The Swiss, revolver in hand, must have exercised rare restraint in not using them, when they were met with oars and gaffs in desperate resistance! Oh, oh!

Secret Swiss Posts.

The times in which we live breed secret societies everywhere. Not only Fascisti, Communists, Bürgerwehren, etc., but even more secret ones, and the latest one has just been unearthed in Switzerland, according to *The Times* of 23rd Nov.:—

By order of the Swiss Federal Post and Telegraph Department, the Geneva police have recently seized the wireless receiving set of a Geneva individual who had failed to register this set and to pay the yearly 10 frs. tax. According to the Swiss wireless regulations, which compel amateurs to register their post and to pay a tax, and which forbids them from writing down what they hear, a fine may be imposed up to 1,000 frs. The Swiss police have also seized ten secret broadcasting posts set up by a secret association of young men for corresponding between themselves in Switzerland and with foreign countries.

Now, broadcasting secretly and against the law must be put down, as any wireless fan will know. There is a more serious aspect than mere interference with the official broadcasting. Such secret broadcasting may be used for political purposes and may well give the Government in whose territory it takes place a lot of trouble.

St. Bernard's Hospice.

The passing of "free hospitality" by the St. Bernard's Hospice monks prompts Horace Wyndham to the following article in *Eve*, the Ladies' Pictorial of Nov. 18th:—

It may come, perhaps, as something of a shock to those who have visited it in the past to learn that the famous Hospice of St. Bernard is about to break the tradition of nearly a thousand years. The tradition is that of extending free food and a night's lodging to all who knock upon its doors. Instead of this, the system of imposing a fixed tariff is to be adopted.

The change has not been resolved upon lightly. It is a matter of necessity. Left to themselves, the good monks would infinitely prefer to carry on the generous practice of their founder, St. Bernard of Menthon, and accept nothing beyond any voluntary thank-offering that their guests choose to make. But the cost of providing the requisite food and shelter is now so much beyond the revenue obtained from this source that it has become imperative to raise funds by other means. This will be the more readily understood when it is said that the annual number of visitors to the Hospice exceeds 20,000.

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Of this army of guests, more than half are Italians, most of them workmen looking for employment in the Swiss valleys. The remainder come from all over Europe, with, perhaps, a couple of British and American tourists, who like to finish up a Swiss or Italian trip with an expedition to this part of the world. As a rule, they only make it in the height of summer. The Hospice is then fairly easy of access, whereas during the winter months it is almost entirely cut off by fierce storms and crashing avalanches, wrapped in continual fogs and mists, and half buried in great drifts of snow.

Where the tourist from Switzerland is concerned, Montreux, on the Lake of Geneva, offers a very convenient starting point, as there is a fair motor road the whole way to the summit of the Pass. The journey takes about six hours, the route being through Martigny and the Drance Valley. Every kilometre of the steep and winding road is historic. It has echoed to the tramp of Caesar's legions, to the footsteps of weary pilgrims, and to the tumble of the guns which Napoleon's "Grand Army" dragged with such effort across the Alps towards the battlefield of Marengo. At the little village of Bourg St. Pierre, where Napoleon slept for a night, stands a bridge said to have been built by the mighty Charlemagne, and adjoining it is a stone that still bears an inscription to Constantine. From here onwards the gorge becomes narrower and more precipitous with every step. There is scarcely any vegetation. The scenery is bare and bleak and desolate. Nothing but great wastes of trackless snow, and everywhere a brooding silence.

The Hospice of St. Bernard was founded in the tenth century by St. Bernard, a young priest who joined the Augustine Fathers and became Archdeacon of Aosta. The present building, however, dates from the sixteenth century. It consists of two large stone blocks, built foursquare and solid to withstand the fierce storms that beat upon it, connected by a bridge, and with a couple of small outhouses adjoining. At the back, on the edge of the road leading towards Italy, is a little lake, round the banks of which a few pale pines and forget-me-nots are sometimes found. The Hospice contains about a hundred rooms in its two wings, with refectory, library and chapel, etc.

Among the visitors to the Hospice of St. Bernard have been many of distinction. The King and Queen of Italy have made several motor trips there from Aosta, and members of our own Royal family have signed the visitors' book. Queen Victoria once stayed within its walls for a night, and the late King Edward, as a very young man just beginning his travels, also experienced the hospitality of the monks. On returning to England, Queen Victoria sent her hosts a portrait of herself. This is still to be seen in the salon.

With regard to their sleeping accommodation, visitors are divided into classes, and rank as (1) tourists, (2) workmen, and (3) paupers. Only those in the first category can expect bedrooms, the others being allotted to dormitories. Where, however, their food is concerned, no distinction is made, and everybody fares alike. The menu is simple and plentiful and is served in separate dining-rooms, with one of the monks acting as host. After one night's lodging a guest must, unless prevented by illness or bad weather, continue his journey.

As a rule, the number of monks on duty, in the Hospice at a time is fifteen. They are all members of the Order of St. Augustine, and generally begin their work of devotion and self-sacrifice at the age of twenty. The majority of them come from the Alpine districts, as few others can endure the rigorous climate for any prolonged period. As it is, even the strongest of them are apt to suffer from rheumatism and neurasthenia. They all have their special niche. Thus, one acts as Prior and directs the affairs generally; another instructs the novices; another is keeper of the chapel; another is librarian; another attends to the finances and stores; and another is in charge of the dogs. Provisions are obtained from Martigny and Aosta, and also from a farm and pasture in the valley below. For crossing the snow the monks use skis. They were the first to introduce these articles into

Switzerland. This was in 1883, when they received a couple of sample pairs from Norway. These served as a pattern for others which they made in their own workshops.

Every visitor to the Hospice finds special interest in the famous St. Bernard dogs, with the maintenance of which the monks are traditionally connected. The pack was first formed about the year 1812, being specially bred from Newfoundlanders and either Danish or Württemberg mastiffs. Until the late 'sixties, when some puppies were bought from the monks by a British tourist, no specimens had been seen in England, for one that was given to the Prince of Wales as a souvenir of an earlier visit died before it left Italy. The dogs are all of considerable size, and are strong enough to carry a man on their backs. Their usual colouring is orange, but some are brindled or tawny, with white muzzles and chests. Like their masters, they seldom live long, as they develop rheumatism and heart trouble at an early age.

The training of the St. Bernard dogs begins almost when they are puppies. The first step in the process is to couple a young dog to an older animal and turn him lose some distance from the kennels. At first he runs backwards and forwards in a frantic attempt to discover the path. After a little time instinct teaches him not to stray, and he can then be trusted to go out by himself. The practice, however, when travellers are being searched for is to despatch the dogs in pairs. Should a wandering traveller be met, one dog will then stop beside him, while the other will run back to the Hospice and guide a rescue party to the spot.

Before the Hospice was linked up with the outer world by telephone, it was the custom for a band of monks and dogs to start from it every morning to search the tracks leading towards Italy and Switzerland. This, however, is no longer necessary, as a warning message is always given when anybody passes through one of the villages in the district.

I can well refrain from writing about Winter Sports in Switzerland this week, seeing that we can hardly keep warm ourselves here and have seen tobogganning nearly all over the South of England. Semichoy I hardly feel so keen on wintry conditions in England, and the yearning for the first snow, which I well remember having possessed me in my youthful days, is absent, or at least very faint. I suppose as one grows older one grows not wiser, perhaps, but colder, and one appreciates warmth rather than cold. At all events, it does require an effort these frosty mornings to get up!

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