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HOME NEWS

Approximate figures, showing the revenue and expenses of the Swiss Federal Railways during 1924, have been published. The net surplus is stated to be 16.7 million francs, against 3.69 million francs in the preceding 12 months, although 16.9 millions have been placed to Reserves, against 11.4 millions in 1923.

M. Garbani-Nerini, since 1922 one of the Federal Judges in Lausanne, has been nominated Director of the International Postal Union, in place of Dr. Camille Decoppet, who died last month. Judge Garbani is 58 and a native of the Ticino, in the politics of which canton he took a prominent part as leader of the old Radical party.

A novel mission has been successfully achieved by three military aeroplanes from the Dübendorf depot. A few ski-enthusiasts from Zurich were known to have been snowed in for seven days at the Marinelli hut, and it was feared that their shortness of food might lead to disaster. The air-men, circling round the Bernina, discovered the ski-ers, who were working hard cutting a way through the snow; they dropped a number of food parcels and returned to report the result of their mission.

Three months imprisonment and a fine of Frs. 300 was the penalty imposed by the Morges courts on a chauffeur for having, in an intoxicated condition, run into a horse-drawn carriage, causing the death of one of the occupants.

Four firemen have lost their lives whilst having a rehearsal near the iron works Gonzen (Sargans). One of the long ladders happened to touch a high-tension line, with the result that four "pompiers" were immediately thrown off, all efforts at reviving them being unsuccessful.

Isabelle Kaiser, the well-known authoress, died in her chalet at Beckenried on the 17th inst. at the age of 59, after a short illness. She was a prolific writer, who, though born in Zug, was equally conversant with the French language, in fact, her first works were published in the latter tongue. Her books were very much appreciated in France, and she was the recipient of several prizes from the French Academy. Her German works dealt chiefly with historical and local fiction, the best-known being "Die Friedenssucherin" and "Der wandernde See."

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

La population de la ville de Bâle. — Au cours de l'année 1924, la population de la ville fédérale a passé de 104,773 personnes à 106,148. L'accroissement, de 1375 personnes, a été plus élevé que l'année précédente (899). Mais il est dû essentiellement à l'exédent de l'afflux du dehors sur les départs; car le nombre des naissances a subi une forte diminution, tombant de 1760 à 1559, tandis que celui des décès a été sensiblement le même: 1088 contre 1108. On a enregistré 1013 mariages, contre 1011 en 1923. Le nombre des voyageurs signalés dans les hôtels a passé de 139,987 à 152,796. (*La Tribune de Genève.*)

La population neuchâteloise. — Elle était à fin 1924 de 126,789 habitants, en augmentation de 436 âmes sur 1923. En 1914 la population neuchâteloise comptait 135,000 habitants. La crise économique a valu au canton de Neuchâtel la dépopulation des centres industriels. Maintenant que l'industrie reprend, le phénomène contraire se produit.

Cependant, à côté des villes qui s'accroissent, il y a des villages qui ont peine à maintenir leur population et si l'on examine les chiffres des localités et non des districts seulement, on constate un déplacement de population vers les villages où l'industrie s'est implantée, au détriment des endroits éloignés et purement agricoles.

Le pays neuchâtelois en est en 1925 au même chiffre de population totale qu'au début du siècle, mais il y a 2,000 habitants de plus à Neuchâtel et 3,000 à La Chaux-de-Fonds et naturellement

5,000 de moins dans les campagnes. Il y a vingt-cinq ans aussi, il n'y avait que 5,000 femmes de plus que d'hommes, aujourd'hui la majorité féminine est de dix mille; cette majorité à Neuchâtel est de 2,000 et à La Chaux-de-Fonds de trois mille. (*Feuille d'avis.*)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

To-day's Great Thought.

A man to be greatly good must imagine intensively and comprehensively. He must put himself in the place of another and many others; the pain and pleasure of his species must become his own. —SHELLEY.

Who lost on the Deal?

Daily Herald (23rd Feb.):—

An Aberdonian had only sixpence in the world. He had also a thirst which only a pint of beer, price eightpence, could allay. He took his sixpence to a pawnbroker, who gave him fivepence "on" it, with the customary "ticket" for redemption. The Aberdonian then sold the ticket for threepence—total eightpence.

Think it over.

At the first glance, I really thought that by emulating the Aberdonian's exploit, I could at last find a way by which to balance my own budget, and I began at once to think of likely friends I might usefully approach with this wonderful scheme. Alas!—a word expressing deep sorrow, as they say in the clues to cross-word puzzles—upon more earnest consideration, aided by that splendid mathematical training we Swiss get at our schools, I have come to the conclusion that the above scheme is as fruitful of profit as the cat-farming scheme we heard of in years gone by. More's the pity.

Electricity for all London by Cables from the Coalfields in the Midlands.

Daily Express (20th Feb.):—

The Government has in view a great scheme for the supply of electricity to London from four or five generating stations, which will send the necessary current through high-tension cables from the pit mouths of the Midland coalfields.

Eight or ten of the existing London stations will be maintained to meet emergencies.

This announcement was made in the House of Commons last night by Colonel Moore-Brabazon, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, during a debate on the London Electricity Supply Bill, which aims at setting up a joint electricity authority composed of the private and municipal undertakings.

The average consumption of electricity in England per day, he said, was 100 units per person, whereas in America it was 500 units. He looked forward to the Londoner using as much as the American. Some people thought it would take ten years to achieve this, but he disagreed with this view.

He said that whereas it cost 11s. per ton to send coal to London generating stations, electricity could be supplied by cables from the pit mouth at a rate equal to 6s. per ton.

I wonder how many readers of *The Swiss Observer* remember my plea, last year, that it would be ever so much more economical to transport electrical energy straight from the mines to the big towns and to the whole country. Frank Hodges, the then Mining Secretary, made a big effort to popularise the idea later on. Now the Tory Government proclaims it as a wonderful new thing and, I dare say, most of the public will think it greatly to the credit for the present Government. As far as I am concerned, I don't mind who gets the credit, as long as something along these useful lines is being attempted. I wonder now, whether that other pet idea of mine, the abolition of railway fares and other transport charges will be taken up by an enthusiastic Government supporter in the House of Commons. It would require some courage, as did, no doubt, the call for abolition of bridge and road tolls in the dim past—not a century ago!

Winter Sports and the 'Flu.

Manchester Guardian (14th Feb.):—

My heart is like a lump of lead

And dwelleth somewhere in my boots;

My nose is like a radish, red

From tip unto its tender roots;

Around my back the shivers cling.

My aching limbs are all a-tremble,

And, on the whole, a piece of string

(Well chewed) is what I most resemble.

Pour me a dose of strong quinine

And give me jujube things to chew,

For these disgusting symptoms mean

That I am smitten low by 'flu;

Yes, wrap me up and keep me warm,

Or let me pass away discreetly—

I bow before the ancient storm,

Caught once again and caught completely.

Yet solace is not wholly lost,

I have one comfort for my cares—

At least my acquisition cost

Me naught in rail and travel fares;

'Twas here, my native heath upon,

I got it where chicks get the hatchet—

I should be wild if I had gone

As far as Switzerland to catch it!

LUCIO.

Sic! Them's my sentiments! And "Flu" being very fashionable over here, I wonder why Swiss should make efforts to pay visits to these shores, but they do, as witness the following from the *Co-Operative News*, of February 14th:—

Herr Ulrich Meyer, the editor of the Swiss Co-operative Movement journal, "Genossenschaftliches Volksblatt," is interesting himself in organising trips to England in association with the Workers' Travel Association of our own country.

An announcement is now made for parties of twenty to twenty-five to form a travel group; and the tour will take in London as the metropolis and Manchester as the co-operative capital. And if our Swiss workmen say they "want to go to Manchester," it seems even more strange, seeing that occasionally one "has to go to Manchester, but one never wants to."

Another Step in the Right Direction.

Morning Post (18th Feb.):—

Our Brussels correspondent telegraphs that the Belgian and Swiss Governments have signed a treaty of general conciliation similar to treaties concluded by the Federal Government with Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Brazil, Austria and Italy. These treaties are based on conciliation prior to any conflict between the two contracting countries.

The League of Nations.

I have all along had a feeling that the space allotted me in *The Swiss Observer* was hardly sufficient, also that I was hardly competent enough, to put before our Readers the work done by the League of Nations. And yet, most of my Readers feed, as far as their intellectual and political food is concerned, on the Daily Papers, and I know, therefore, that the ideas they are able to form on the work done at Geneva are often hazy, if not very wide of the mark. The *Economist*, on February 14th, published the following lucid and interesting letter from its Geneva Correspondent, and I think my Readers ought not to skip it, but to read it carefully. After all, if we Swiss do not take a great interest in the League, who ought to? For us it is a "point d'honneur":—

"International agreement on any question cannot be based only on the beauty of an ideal; it must also have due regard for realities." This observation of the French Colonial Minister at the Geneva Opium Conference immediately after the departure of the American delegation fairly implies what it is that has led to America's withdrawal. Another side of the question, forcibly put by the chief Dutch delegate, was the quite impossible form of the American delegation's participation. It was not collaboration at all, and no State could successfully take part in any international conference on such lines.

Mr. Porter, who is chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the American House of Representatives, established his own instructions, whereby he was expressly prevented from making any concessions on the principles of the American proposals. He secured a vote of the American Congress on these instructions in the form of a law, and he therefore came to Geneva bound hand and foot, absolutely incapable of negotiating. He threw his proposals at the head of the Conference, received concession after concession from the other Powers, but made no effort at all to explain his own point of view or to reply to the figures and arguments of his opponents. An international conference presupposes the possibility of reciprocal concessions, of a real interchange of opinion, and regard for undeniable facts. For one of the parties to have imperative orders to impose its will upon the others on pain of leaving the Conference is a scarcely defensible attitude. It is as near an ap-