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HOME NEWS

The two houses of the Swiss parliament re-assembled last week for a three weeks' session.

In the States Council a suggestion that the Confederation should come to an agreement with all those countries maintaining foreign legions in order to prevent recruiting amongst Swiss citizens was declared to be impracticable of realisation.—No less than three strongly supported interpolations were presented, severely criticising the Government for its accommodating attitude with regard to Russia. We publish in another column the full explanation of President Motta as officially communicated to the Press.

The municipality of Berne proposes to acquire at a cost of Frs. 182,000 the extensive estate known as "Hühnerhubel" and to construct thereon a large aerodrome.

"Nothing doing" is the result of the elections last week-end for members of the Lucerne municipal council, as none of the candidates has obtained the required absolute majority.

By inflicting short terms of imprisonment the Basle appeal court has practically reversed the judgment of the lower tribunal when the five policemen, who last October mistook a watchman for a burglar and fired at him with fatal results, were acquitted of the charge of having made unjustified use of their pistols.

During last year 190 destitute Russian nationals have been cared for in Switzerland through the medium of the Swiss Red Cross Society; about 40 of them are inmates of mental homes and a similar number of institutions for consumptives.

In the course of a festive procession in connection with the trade exhibition arranged in Zurich by Swiss hotel and innkeepers, one of the horses shied, with the result that the rider lost his seat and fell between a tramcar and a motor-lorry; he died soon after arrival at the local hospital. The victim is H. Egarter, the owner of the restaurant "Becken-Rain" in Zurich VI.

Misjudging the distance of an approaching tramcar, the farmer Joseph Meli, from Wyden-Benken (St. Gall) was knocked down from his ox-driven wagon and subsequently died from his injuries.

Owing to the overturning of their motor cycle during a night ride Hans Meier, age 24, from Lanzenneunforn (Thurgau) lost his life, whilst his companion, Albert Keller, from Dettighofen, suffered serious injuries.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Deutsches Theater in Sudafrika—Mitte Juni wird in Kapstadt, unter der Direktion von Kurt Liessem vom Stadttheater Chur das erste deutsche Berufstheater eröffnet. Finanziert wird das Unternehmen von dem mehrere tausend Mitglieder zählenden Deutschen Verein in Kapstadt. Das Ganze ist als ein Versuch anzusehen, da bei ungenügender Rentabilität das Ensemble Ende des Jahres wieder zurückkehrt. Geschäftsleiter des Theaters ist ein Schweizer, Herr Grob aus Aarau. Auch im Ensemble selbst sind Schweizer Kräfte beschäftigt, so Therese Gerber (Thun) vom Stadttheater Winterthur und Eugen Webeck vom Städtebund-Theater Solothurn-Biel. Für den Anfang sind zur Aufführung vorgesehen: "Faust," "Kabile und Liebe," "Johannisfeuer," "Spiel im Schloss," "Grabmal des unbekanntenen Soldaten" und eine Anzahl ältere Operetten.

—*Neu Zürcher Zeitung.*

Von kriegsgeschädigten Schweizern—Vor einiger Zeit hat die schweizerisch-deutsche Hilfsgesellschaft ihre Tätigkeit eingestellt, und bei diesem Anlass haben sowohl der deutsche Gesandte in Bern als auch Reichspräsident von Hindenburg ihre Anerkennung für die von der Schweiz geleistete Hilfe ausgesprochen. Das Glasgemälde, das der Reichspräsident der Schweiz verehrt hat, wird für

uns stets ein wertvolles Zeugnis für die persönliche Vornehmheit des greisen Feldherrn sein, und die Herren, welche am Empfang beim deutschen Gesandten teilgenommen haben, werden jenen Abend als einen neuen Beweis unserer freundschaftlichen Beziehungen mit der deutschen Schwesterrepublik in guter Erinnerung halten.

Hingegen wird man es selbst der sprichwörtlich gewordenen schweizerischen Bescheidenheit nicht verargen können, wenn sie das heute neuerstarkte Deutsche Reich darauf hinweist, dass es auch Gelegenheit hätte, durch tatkräftiges Eingreifen der Not jener Schweizer zu steuern, die durch die deutsche Kriegführung Hab und Gut verloren haben. Noch immer sind die in Belgien gebrandschatzten Schweizer nicht entschädigt worden. Es sind ungefähr fünf Schweizerfamilien, deren Besitz 1914 eingäschert wurde. Heute müssen es diese Leute bitter beklagen, dass sie dem Schweizerland ihre Treue bewahrt haben. Hätten sie sich nämlich naturalisieren lassen, was ja in Belgien nicht schwierig ist, so wäre ihnen der erlittene Schaden infolge der Versailler Bestimmungen von den Deutschen vergütet worden. So aber erhielten sie bis heute nichts. Deutschland zahlte nicht, Belgien nicht, die Schweiz nicht. Ich traf in Löwen eine 75-jährige Zürcherin, die Witwe eines Ingenieurs, die durch den Brand von 1914 alles verloren hat und heute ihr Brot durch Krankenpflege verdienen muss. Und während diese wackere Frau, die einst Tage gesehen hat, wo sie wahrlich nicht gezwungen war, in fremden Solde zu arbeiten, sich Stück für Stück ihres Hausrates neu erwerben musste, hat eine schweizerische philanthropische Gesellschaft ungefähr 70 Häuser aufgebaut und sie belgischen Brandgeschädigten beinahe gratis überlassen. Unsere Landsleute wurden übergangen!

Ebenfalls in Löwen traf ich einen Konditor aus dem Kanton Neuenberg, der nach 30-jähriger Arbeit ein blühendes Geschäft sein eigen nannte, um es in den Augusttagen 1914 in Schutt und Asche sinken zu sehen. Vergebens hatte er sein Haus durch die Schweizerfarben zu schützen gesucht, als eines der ersten ging es in Flammen auf. Wohl steht heute Löwen wieder schöner da denn je. Deutschland hat gezahlt und Belgien hat nachgeholfen. Nur die Schweizer sind leer ausgegangen. Und wie in Löwen, ging es auch den andern kriegsgeschädigten Schweizern in Belgien. Seit 1914 hören unsere Landsleute auf alle ihre Bitten nur stets das ewige und so diplomatische "nous verrons." Die Akten dürften sich seither im Politischen Departement hoch aufgetürmt haben, Taten sind keine gefolgt. Und wir schreiben 1927!

—*Neu Zürcher Zeitung.*

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The Babel of Languages at Geneva.

We have often wondered how the language problem of the League of Nations conferences can be solved to everybody's satisfaction. The majority of the delegates are apparently unable to express themselves freely in one of the two official tongues—French or English—and the prompt imparting of the content of their addresses is evidently vital in any general discussion. A new device to facilitate the interpretation of either English or French has been tried for some time and is likely to be adopted in the near future. It does not strike us, however, to be of much practical value as the delegates may be credited to be sufficiently conversant with these two official languages to follow with confidence what is being said in them. In the *Times* (June 6th) the following particulars of this new device are given:—

The past week has seen a step towards what appears to be a sound compromise between the need for restraint in the official recognition of languages and the need for making more comprehensible to delegates the discussions at the great international meetings. The process consists in providing "unofficially" for those who have the strongest claim for attention, a simultaneous interpretation from the original address made in English or in French. The problem is made less difficult by the progress that has recently been made in the electrical reception and transmission of sound. But an elementary test last year showed this method to be rich in small troubles. In the first place, though the great international conferences have demonstrated to what high degrees of efficiency the art of interpretation can be carried, it has been shown that, though a skilled interpreter finds no difficulty in making accurate notes while listening to an orator, he does experience very considerable difficulty in listening to the same orator and giving

ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

June 21st, 1339.—Battle of Laupen and victory of the Bernese against the landed aristocracy under the leadership of the Count of Nidau. Fribourg fought on the side of the aristocracy. The Forest Cantons assisted Bern. The town of Laupen was defended by Johann von Bubenberg. Although Bern could only muster 6,000 men, against 20,000 of their enemies, they gained a magnificent victory, and it became proverbial that God himself had become a citizen of Bern. In commemoration of their victory the Bernese formed an Everlasting League with the Waldstätten in 1353.

June 22nd, 1476.—Victory of the Confederates at Murten against Charles the Bold. Murten was defended by Adrian von Bubenberg. (We again should like to draw attention to the splendidly written book by P. E. de Vallière, "Murten." A German translation has been published by Spes, in Lausanne.)

June 24th, 1713.—The Forest Cantons renew the Rütli-Oath for the establishment of true unity. (Such unity, and especially the observance of it, is urgently needed to-day.)

June 25th, 1529.—Peace of Kappel. Revocation by the five Cantons of the Austrian Alliance.

a simultaneous verbal interpretation in another language. The interpreter's hearing seems to become "jammed" by his own voice. Secondly, it has been found that, however patient listeners to wireless programmes may be in the wearing of headphones, delegates to international congresses are not equally blessed with patience, and that the ordinary headphones, when used for the reception of a translation of a speech which is being given at the same time become uncomfortable to wear and, moreover, do not exclude the direct voice of the person whose address is being translated.

Experiments made last Monday seem to show that most of the earlier difficulties have been mastered—so much so that it appears highly probable that the International Labour Conference will have started a new and permanent practice. It is understood that the Conference Hall at Geneva is to be equipped at once with sufficient gear to enable 80 persons to listen to a simultaneous translation—perhaps two distinct simultaneous translations—of a speech given in an "official language."

The new process is briefly as follows:—Within hearing distance and within full sight of the orator sits a translator with a telephonic mouthpiece specially "damped" to make it insensible to sounds from a distance. The interpreter closely watches the speaker on the rostrum (the earlier experiments showed the isolation of the interpreter in a silence cabin to be a mistake), and makes his interpretation and any necessary commentary into the microphone, using a strength of voice which is little more than a whisper. These sounds are amplified electrically, carried by wires to the various tables at which the delegations are seated, and reproduced at considerable strength in a series of earpieces like those of stethoscopes placed before each delegate. These earpieces have three advantages—they completely fill the ear channels, and thereby cut out extraneous noises; they are light, and therefore not uncomfortable; and they permit, by means of a screw-valve on the rubber tubes which feed them, an easy control of the volume of sound. During Monday's experiments at Geneva the German delegates seated in the front row immediately beneath the orator, received the German interpretation absolutely free from the speech proper.

The apparatus prepared for the Secretariat of the International Labour Office for this purpose by Captain Gordon Finlay, who is attached to the Office to study this particular problem, has, among a number of minor refinements, one particularly novel feature. The amplifier, besides possessing its own rectifier for the conversion of the ordinary lighting current into working current—which avoids the necessity for high tension batteries—is controlled entirely by the plugging-in of the telephone jack attached to the interpreter's microphone. Further, if two jacks are plugged in, from two distinct