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HOME NEWS

States Councillor Dr. Jos. Räber has been appointed director of the International Telegraph Bureau at Berne in place of the late M. Henri Etienne. Dr. Räber, who is 56 and was born at Küssnacht, is the leader of the Catholic Party in his native canton, Schwyz.

No official support is extended to a proposal for the erection, somewhere in the Palais Fédéral, of a bust to commemorate the late Col. von Sprecher.

The question of replacing by motor bus services some of the municipal tramways, which for the last ten years have been operated with considerable deficits, is receiving the serious consideration of the St. Gall authorities.

A collision took place on New Year's Eve on the Rhaetian railways near Bergün station. Through some so far unexplained defect in the working of the points an express train ran head on into a passenger train, with the result that the locomotives and one or two carriages were telescoped. All the passengers had a miraculous escape, the only one hurt being the engine driver, Lüscher.

The workshops attached to the chemical laboratory of the boot and shoe factory Bally, in Schönenwerd, were destroyed by an explosion as a result of a fire; no lives were lost.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Schoolgirls and Winter Sports.

The long school holidays are often a bore for both the parents and the children. There are several associations which arrange collective trips to Switzerland under proper supervision. One of these camps for girls is described in the *Manchester Guardian* (Dec. 27th):—

"It is rather a large undertaking to arrange a winter sports camp for schoolgirls, but this has been successfully achieved by the Federation of University Women's Camps for Schoolgirls. This body has, for some years past, set itself the task of doing for the girl at school what the Student Christian Movement is doing for students. It was felt that in the free and happy atmosphere of camp life it would be easily possible to relate Christian ideals to the ordinary things of everyday life in the home and in the school. As a result, camps are held during the summer months in many parts of the British Isles and also abroad, and these camps are attended by secondary schoolgirls from all over the country. There are usually between thirty-five and forty of the camps held during the year, and to these go approximately twelve hundred girls.

A winter sports camp was held last December and January at Château d'Ex, Switzerland, and a similar camp has been arranged to be held at the same place again this year. The intending campers will set out to-morrow for a fortnight, arriving back in London on January 12th.

The cost of a holiday of this kind is extremely low, for the aim of the organisers is to include in the party those girls who would not otherwise have an opportunity for a treat of this kind. The inclusive charge is thirteen guineas for each camper, and this charge covers everything but pocket-money and excursions, for which only a small sum will be needed. The girls are all the time under the care of university women, who act as guides, philosophers and friends, as well as officers to the party. The number of the campers is about thirty-five, and of these thirty-five five are Manchester girls.

The days spent at the camp are filled with pleasant activity. The building in which the girls are housed is a school which overlooks the village. It has a south aspect, and behind it rise hills dotted with pines. Pine woods are to be seen to the right and to the left, and near at hand are good ski-ing slopes, skating rinks, and many lugeing tracks.

At the camp the day begins at 7.30, when the girls are called. An hour later comes break-

fast, and an hour after this the whole party is expected to be out of doors. The mid-day dinner is served at one o'clock, and at 5.30 there is a dance or a concert. Supper is at a quarter to seven, and at half-past seven the girls have prayers and a study circle or address. Those who are responsible for arranging the camps prepare courses of Bible study. Discussions are encouraged amongst the girls and the officers, and this, the more serious side of the camp life, appears to be as much enjoyed as its lighter aspects. Bedtime for the campers is nine o'clock—not at all too soon for girls who are still in their teens, and who have spent a good part of their day in the open air engaged in vigorous exercise.

Intending campers are sent full particulars of the equipment which is needed for their fortnight's outing. Thick boots for walking and another pair for ski-ing or skating are needed, and waterproof knickers, a macintosh, and an extra short skirt are also required.

The purpose of the camp is to draw school-girls together for a holiday which shall be healthy and happy, and which shall be at the same time one that will give them something more lasting than a merely transient "good time" feeling. The ideals of Christian life and service, presented without sentimentality and with no denominational bias, are laid before the girls in a manner which cannot fail to make a deep and lasting impression on them."

The New League of Nations Building.

Though much time, money and a great variety of talents have combined to elaborate plans for the proposed new palace, fears are voiced here and in Switzerland that the "many cooks are likely to spoil the broth." Here is what the *Evening Standard* (Dec. 30th) says:—

"It appears that M. Nénot's design for the new building of the League of Nations at Geneva is to be altered much more than was at first supposed. A sort of committee of architects of very different tastes and tendencies is to overhaul it, and their joint efforts are likely to convert what is at present merely dull into a positive horror.

A better result would probably have been obtained had the League of Nations had the courage to choose some architect whose accomplished work showed him to possess talent and originality, and give him a free hand. That was what Louis XIV. did in the case of Versailles. Competitions are rarely satisfactory."

The Valais to be Opened to Motor Cars.

Some particulars are given in the *Times* (Dec. 27th) of the great road construction schemes which several councils in the canton Valais have decided upon.

"The Government of the Canton of Valais has decided to spend about £400,000 next year on the construction of several main roads in the Alpine valleys. One of these roads will lead to the village of Chandolin, at a height of 6,350ft., in the Val d'Anniviers, which claims to be the highest village in Europe that is permanently inhabited. Another road, 12ft. wide, is to be built between Stalden and Saas-Fee, in the Visp valley.

When this road is completed—probably at the end of next year—motor-cars will be able to climb as far as Saas-Fee (5,900ft.). A mule track is so far the only means of communication between Stalden—on the railway line from Visp to Zermatt—and Saas-Fee, and though the construction of the new road will be regretted by Alpinists and lovers of the picturesque, the new means of communication will no doubt contribute towards the economic development of that remote valley, one of the last in the Alps where vehicles could not penetrate.

The representatives of the Communes of the Visp district have decided to build a main road between Stalden and St. Niklaus, thus enabling motor-cars to go as far as the latter village, pending the construction of the St. Niklaus-Zermatt section, which may be completed within the next three years."

Engelberg.

There are few winter sports centres which can boast of historical associations, a fact which is dwelt upon in a short reference in the *Catholic Times* (Dec. 23rd):—

"Of all the now numerous "winter sports" centres of Switzerland there is one that should have special attraction for Catholic holiday-makers. This is Engelberg—"The Mount of the Angels." It lies close to one of the main lines of comfortable travel from England. The first

long, but rapid, stage of the journey is to Lucerne. Then, a little more than twenty miles south of the lake, accessible by a mountain railway, stands the little hill town of Engelberg, in a high valley, amidst glorious Alpine scenery. It takes its name from the Benedictine monastery of Our Lady of the Angels.

The Monastery was founded in the later years of the eleventh century. It has had an unbroken religious life since then. In the Middle Ages its Abbots held princely rank, and their domain extended over a hundred villages. The Abbey has now some fifty monks and a school of about a hundred students. It has a library of twenty thousand volumes and about two hundred valuable manuscripts. Some few of these represent salvage from the far more valuable library that was pillaged and dispersed by the French Revolutionary invaders in 1798. This had a rich treasure of manuscripts accumulated during the medieval centuries and a splendid collection of early printed books."

Domestic Servants.

A correspondent in the *Glasgow Herald* (Dec. 28th) sings the praises of the domestic servants in Switzerland. Unfortunately, their angelic attributes seem to vanish as soon as they set foot on English soil.

"Many British travellers abroad cast covetous eyes on the capable, pleasant-looking maids who serve them in Swiss hotels, wishing they could import such girls to their own homes. What a boon it would be to have an experienced domestic who would be content to work for 14 or 15 hours a day for £30 a year, or an inexperienced girl for £7 a year! And those are the wages domestics receive in middle class families in Switzerland.

The Swiss domestic servant's hours are from 6 a.m. in summer, 7 a.m. in winter, till late evening, 9 or 10 o'clock, and she is fully occupied during that time. She is expected to turn out rooms, to cook, to do the washing and ironing, to weed the garden, and, in her spare time, help with the family mending. Her weekly holiday is on Sunday, when she is free for several hours in the afternoon. Though in many cases the maidservant does the washing washerwomen are usually engaged by families who adhere to the good old custom of washing the household linen at intervals of three months. In former days in Switzerland the washing took place once in six months, but a monthly washing is becoming more general. The washerwoman requires to be paid 5s. a day; during that time she eats five times, and for some of her repasts wine is necessary, but she works a ten-hour day, and for a washing of three months' linen the remuneration is, perhaps, not excessive.

Experienced Swiss maids all speak at least two languages, usually French and German. The young girls of German Switzerland, to whom it is a necessity to know French, go to French Switzerland as volunteer domestics—that is, the girl, in exchange for her domestic services, has the opportunity of learning French in the course of her daily life. The young volunteer's duties are the same as those of other domestics, but she eats with the family and sits with the family. Her mistress is generally very kind to her, taking pains to teach her many things besides French, and at the end of the year for which she is engaged she has not only learned to speak French usefully, but is accomplished in cooking and domestic economy. The system of volunteer domestics is one which benefits both the mistresses and the maids, and parents who are sufficiently well-to-do sometimes take this method of training their daughters."

A Grave Statement.

The *Westminster Gazette* (Dec. 30th) is the only English daily that refers to the grave charges made in a Swiss daily in connection with the recent disaster to an Italian liner:—

"The *Bernese Bund*, generally regarded as the Swiss Government's paper, to-day contains grave accusations in regard to the sinking of the Italian liner *Princess Mafalda*, when six Swiss citizens were drowned.

The *Bund* declares that the ship's engines were defective when she left Genoa, and became completely out of order during the voyage.

The truth was hidden from the passengers (it goes on to declare), and no safety measures were taken. During the wreck the crew lost their heads and the officers did nothing to prevent their abandoning the ship. The rescue work was carried out by other ships which came up.



Further, the lifeboats were old and inadequate in number.

Afterwards obstacles were put in the way of passengers telling their stories, and the company was thus allowed to publish an inexact version. Some of the passengers were even subjected to threats.

This article in what is an extremely prudent paper has created a great sensation in Switzerland.

[The *Princess Majalda* sank on Oct. 25th off the Brazilian coast and about 330 people were lost.]

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The banking and commercial world of Basle, and indeed of Switzerland as a whole, has sustained a severe loss in the death of Mr. Oscar Ritter, who for 23 years was intimately connected with the Swiss Bank Corporation in Basle and latterly held an honoured place as one of its Managing Directors. He was interested in a wide range of industrial and other concerns in Switzerland, and his death will leave a gap difficult to fill.

The money market in Switzerland was characterised during 1927 by great ease, and while the official discount rate of the National Bank remained unchanged at 3½% throughout the year, a level to which it was reduced from 4% in October, 1925, the private discount rate moved between an average of 2.87% in February and 3.47% in July. While Switzerland's bank rate ranked with that of the Federal Reserve Board in the United States as the lowest of any country in the world, the private discount rate, towards the end of the year, at least, had to give way to that prevalent in France and to that in New York.

The market for long-term borrowing in Switzerland was an active one throughout the year, and in spite of the constant and sometimes considerable demands which were made on it, conditions remained easy. Figures compiled by the Swiss National Bank show that during the first eleven months of the year new capital was subscribed for the State, the cantons and the municipalities to the extent of 327 million francs in all, while the total amount of new capital raised for all purposes was 490 million francs. (The December figure, still required to complete the statistics for 1927, is likely to be of no great importance.) When due allowance is made for the numerous conversion operations which have taken place, the total of new money subscribed may be put at about 205 million francs as compared with 45 millions in 1926 and 273 millions in 1925.

These figures refer only to loans issued at fixed rates of interest and must be supplemented by the total of 204 million francs subscribed during the year on account of new issues of ordinary shares for Swiss companies alone, comparing with 138 million francs in 1926, while it is impossible to estimate the amount of Swiss capital invested in foreign issues during the same period.

The volume of activity on the five principal Swiss Stock Exchanges was the greatest ever recorded in their history, and it is, of course, significant of the general revival of the commercial and industrial situation that the turnover of the Stock Exchanges in shares reached an unprecedented level while the number of transactions registered in bonds was actually smaller than that of the preceding year.

The increase of about five million francs shown in the Federal Stamp Duty receipts for the first eleven months of 1927, as compared with the corresponding period in 1926, is significant of the great increase which has taken place in the volume of business.

The movement which has taken place during the year in the quotations of a few of the best-known Swiss securities may serve to bring to a conclusion this brief survey of the financial markets in 1927:—

	Highest	Lowest	End of the year
Swiss Bank Corporation ...	833½	760	805
Credit Suisse ...	885	790	870
Union de Banques Suisses ...	763	674	725
C. F. Bally ...	1350	1220	1350
S. A. Brown Boveri ...	628	523	591
Entreprises Sulzer ...	1182	995	1173
Sandoz ...	4450	3700	4440

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

BONDS.	Dec. 23	Jan. 2
Confederation 3% 1903 ...	81.00	81.50
5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln ...	101.37	101.15
Federal Railways 3½% A—K ...	85.00	86.42
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln. ...	101.30	101.50

SHARES.	Nom	Dec. 23	Jan. 2
Swiss Bank Corporation ...	Fr. 500	Fr. 805	Fr. 809
Credit Suisse ...	500	870	885
Union de Banques Suisses ...	500	727	720
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2845	2855
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	4440	4497
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe ...	1000	2937	3112
S. A. Brown Boveri ...	350	589	596
C. F. Bally ...	1000	1347	1380
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	841	879
Entreprises Sulzer S. A. ...	1000	1167	1190
Comp. de Navig. sur le Lac Léman	500	545	550
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco ...	100	172	180
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon ...	500	735	745

Au secours du palais de la S.D.N.!

Notre indignation nous oblige à venir demander à l'aimable rédacteur en chef de ce journal une hospitalité hâtée. Il se passe à Genève, que dis-je? dans la Cité des Nations un fait grave, dont les conséquences ne peuvent être évaluées, qui peut porter, non seulement à notre siècle, mais aussi à ceux qui le suivront, une atteinte inestimable.

La Société des Nations nous a habitués aux compromis, souvent habiles, toujours boiteux; nous reconnaissons bien volontiers que c'était faire oeuvre de diplomatie et d'apaisement que de chercher par des formules complexes, parfois irréalisables, une entente plus dans la forme que dans les faits. Mais, nous ne lui reconnaissons pas le droit de transplanter dans le domaine artistique, dans le milieu architectural, un système, qui pour être critiqué ailleurs, ne saurait en aucun cas être admis ici.

Vous avez appris que le Comité des Cinq, sur lequel pèsera la malédiction éternelle, vient de confier à deux architectes, dont le nom importe peu, mais dont le style est détestable, le soin d'établir, en collaboration avec trois autres personnalités, dont les projets proviennent une étroite connexion d'idées et de goût avec les lauréats, le plan définitif du palais de la Société des Nations.

Or, d'après les projets de ces Messieurs, on se rend compte que l'on va construire sur les bords du lac de Genève une espèce de bâtisse, genre Galeries Lafayette ou gare de Lausanne (en beaucoup moins bien) qui rappellera les détestables monuments grandiloquents et vides du siècle passé.

Dès le début, on avait dit dans les couloirs, dans les comités, partout où la parole conspire, où le méchant verbiage se donne libre cours, que MM. X. et Y. seraient désignés. Tous ceux qui portent à notre époque l'intérêt auquel elle a droit, tous ceux qui sentent la responsabilité qui pèse sur l'ensemble des peuples faisant partie de la Société des Nations, au moment où va s'ériger le monument qui symbolisera notre XXe siècle, ont frissonné devant de telles déclarations et se sont obstinément refusés à les admettre pour vraies.

Parmi les 400 projets environ qui avaient été péniblement, minutieusement étudiés pour être présentés au Conseil, une dizaine à peine étaient l'expression réelle de notre siècle architectural; trois avaient obtenu un premier prix ex-aequo: un projet franco-suisse, un projet allemand et un projet suédois. C'est par cette influence, et dans cette influence seule qu'on avait le droit de choisir les plans du futur palais de Genève. Que dire de la grâce légère du premier, de l'ensemble et de la hardiesse du second, de la sobriété harmonieuse du troisième? On les a jugés comme trop osés, comme trop définitifs dans leurs tendances et on s'est contenté de rabâcher un travail depuis longtemps commencé.

Et qu'on ne vienne pas nous dire que les beautés naturelles du pays exigeaient une telle "confiserie"! Personne ne voudra croire de pareilles déclarations.

Dès lors, n'y a-t-il vraiment rien à faire et ne pourra-t-on susciter une protestation mondiale contre cette décision et en appeler au tribunal mieux informé, car, mieux informé il doit l'être!

Je sais bien que l'architecture est loin de passionner les foules; je sais bien que beaucoup de gens préfèrent la façade de la gare de Lausanne à quelque audacieuse tentative; mais, je ne peux croire que ceux qui ont le droit d'exprimer leur avis, que ceux qui ont la responsabilité des destinées des peuples ne comprennent pas le faux pas qu'ils sont en train de faire ou qu'ils laissent délibérément s'accomplir. Ici, plus que partout ailleurs, un compromis hybride est une chose scandaleuse. Il ne faut pas qu'elle soit!

Un Suisse indigné.

DIE LANDSGEMEINDEN.

Also, wer noch eine Landsgemeinde sehen will, wird sich eine Fahrt nach Stans, Sarnen, Trogen in den allernächsten Jahren nicht versagen dürfen. Wir laufen angeblich Gefahr, auch diese alte, grossartige und sinnvolle Lebensform zu verlieren. Die Urner jedenfalls wollen, so heisst es, die Landsgemeinde nicht mehr, jede Partei erwarte von einem kleineren Wahlparlament intensivere politische Wirkung für sich selbst. Gegnerin sei besonders die Talschaft Urseren, den armen Talleuten sei die Reise nach Altdorf und zurück zu teuer. Nun kommen aber auch Stimmen aus anderen Kantonen, die mit dem uralten demokratischen Institut auch nicht mehr zufrieden sind. Das Arbeiten der Landsgemeinden wird ein zu wenig bestimmtes, zuverlässiges, als ein unsachliches, zu sehr dem Augenblicksgefühl des Volkes unterworfenem geschildert. Es bliebe zu untersuchen, was an diesen Klagen wirklich und stichhaltig und was an ihnen nur gedankenloses Nachreden des modischen Schlagwortes "Sachlichkeit" ist; oder stehen wir am Ende nur vor dem Sessel- und Titledreize gewisser Politiker, die inmitten einer offenen Landsgemeinde zu kurz zu kommen glauben und ihrer Betriebsamkeit den geschlossenen, leichter zu kontrollierenden Ratssaal wünschen?

Mit ihrer Landsgemeinde machten die Urner in den letzten Jahren gewiss nicht viel Staat, auch sind

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