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The Swiss Observer

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To All Our Readers

A

Prosperous New Year

HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

SWITZERLAND AND GOLD PARITY.

The Federal Council has adopted the National Bank Bill as slightly amended by the National Council.

The Bill is designed to permit of the return to the gold standard.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

In connection with the discovery of illicit drug traffic the police have raided two well-known bars in the centre of the town. Twenty-two persons were arrested.

St. G.T.

The new Federal Councillor, Dr. A. Meyer, has received the freedom of Fällanden, his Bürgergemeinde.

N.Z.Z.

Taxation in the canton is still heavy, as the following figures of communal levies (in % of state tax) show:

Dübendorf	155	Mönchaltorf	225
Pfäffikon	165	Hittnau	190
Russikon	215	Bauma	155
Sternenberg	190	Wetzikon	160
Hinwil	190	Fischenthal	205
Dürnten	175		N.Z.Z.

BERNE.

In the newly-elected Town Council of Berne, the Socialists with a total of 41 members have now an absolute majority.

V.

UNTERWALDEN.

A motor-barge and crew of 5 hauling from Beckenried have been lost during the heavy storms on lake Lucerne on the 13th of this month. Wreckage was found on the following morning, but the bodies have not yet been discovered.

St. G.T.

ZUG.

The cantonal council has prohibited the sale of spirits between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. No new licenses for retailing spirits (Verkauf über die Gasse) will be granted, until a new law regulating such sales has come into force.

St. G.T.

SOLEURE.

The proposal for increased remuneration of Government officials (Besoldungsreform) and Old Age Pensions was defeated by 401 votes (12,890 No, 13,489 Yes).

LAUSANNE.

In the English church at Lausanne a bronze tablet has been unveiled to the memory of Bishop Brent, who died early this year in Switzerland. The inscription commemorates Bishop Brent's chairmanship of the Lausanne Conference on Faith and Order in 1927.

BASLE.

Interesting experiments in the performance of Bach's music under the original conditions are being carried out in Switzerland. The Basle section of the "Nouvelle Société suisse de Musique" recently gave the "Matthew Passion" with a chorus of thirty-two and an orchestra of thirty, thus restoring the balance intended by the composer and very considerably altering the character of the work. With the same object a J. S. Bach Club, limited to thirty members, has been founded at Geneva. To ensure a high standard of performance, it has been agreed that any member absenting himself, without a serious excuse, from two consecutive rehearsals, or arriving late at four rehearsals, shall be expelled.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

1929:

Most of us, at this time of the year, look backwards and take stock not only of our chattels, but of our ideals and, when we balance our accounts, or try to balance them, we are apt to become just a little bit melancholy because so many of our hopes and aspirations have gone under again. At the end of this year 1929 when we read so much of distress prevailing in many quarters, of unemployment clouding so many homes, of poverty, mostly unmerited, sapping the courage of so many of our brethren, we are forcibly reminded of that passage in Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell"

"Und es war ein Volk weit hinten im Lande,
DAS LITT AN GROSSER TEURUNG."

We all know the decision that people came to : EMIGRATION.

I think that in these concluding days of the year 1929 we might resort to *emigration* in a spiritual sense. I think that most of us would benefit considerably if we abandoned the sterile wilds of despair and unhappy brooding over the seeming unconquerable questions of how to help our poorer brethren, of how to get the human family on to a greener field of existence. *Emigration of the Spirit!* Let us resolve to be more courageous in the new year, to battle with renewed vigour against odds, to fight the battle of life with zest and with a glad optimism, to laugh, where we want to weep, to smile where we want to frown, to make little of the obstacles we have hitherto considered unconquerable and to get that frame of mind which will make us convinced that we are winning the battle, that we are making progress, that we are getting nearer our goal, that we are really winning through at last. Let us resolve to see the good in the first place in our brethren's endeavour, to believe in their honest intentions, to feel sure of their sincerity and to be the first to hold out the true hand of good fellowship to all and especially to those among us who are weak and so, by helping others, earn for ourselves that rich reward of that feeling comparable to no other, of duty done willingly.

A little sermon! Yes. Platitudes! Yes! . . . but, oh, so necessary!

1930:

And so, perhaps a wee bit like our old friend, Micawber, we will start our voyage on the uncharted seas of the new year and, having cleansed our spirit by remorseless and sincere examination, we will lustily bid each other

A Very Happy & Prosperous New Year
and then proceed to our daily task.

News from the Ticino:

I have been rather touched by the letter of our friend from the sunny Ticino, in our last issue and I have searched my gleanings with great care with a view to gratifying her wish, as much as possible. But I have not been very successful and the only item of any general interest, dealing with the affairs of our beloved Canton in the South, is the following :

The Observer, 15th Dec.

An uncommon plebiscite will have to be taken in the Canton of Ticino. When amending the regulations for the notaries public, the Great Council of the Canton abolished the rule that all deeds and documents issued by the notaries were to begin with the words "In nome del Signor."

The argument was that houses and landed property, whose transfer is made by the notaries, need not be bought and sold in such a solemn form. But the clerical party are of a different opinion, and are now collecting signatures for a referendum. They protest that this alteration is a disguised attack upon the Church.

I am not sure that I should not regret if the words "In nome del Signor" were left out in future. Quite apart from any point of religious import, I rather think—being somewhat sentimental—that a purchase of a house is not always a speculative matter, but a very important, not to say holy matter. After all the house is the *home*, or it ought to be, and that holy word "home" surely conveys to all my readers why I am not quite sure that I should not regret the leaving out of the time honoured formula. I rather think that a document which gives you possession of your *home*, the nest which shelters your dearest

ones, might quite reverently be pre-faced with that formula.

The Growth of Arbitration:

Catholic Times, 13th Dec.

There are welcome signs that arbitration treaties are becoming more and more popular, especially among those States of Eastern Europe which have naturally been regarded as the danger spots of Europe. The latest of such treaties to be registered with the League of Nations is one between Czechoslovakia and Roumania, which is based on the General Act for the Pacific Settlement of Disputes. This is the eighth treaty of the kind to be concluded by Czechoslovakia, and the third by Roumania. It is encouraging to note that Germany and Austria are amongst the States with which Czechoslovakia has concluded such treaties.

Switzerland, as befitting the nation which serves as the headquarters of the League, has concluded an exceptionally high number of treaties for the peaceful settlement of disputes. She has, within the past few weeks, deposited her seventeenth treaty of this type with the League.

The Death Penalty:

Letter to the Irish Independent, 11th Dec.

Sir,—Your contributor in the article on capital punishment is not quite accurate in his statement that "several American States after getting rid of the death penalty, have been compelled by the increase in serious crime to restore it, and that a rather similar experience also befell some of the Swiss cantons."

It is true that certain American States have abolished capital punishment and subsequently reintroduced it, but in no single case is there statistical evidence that abolition resulted in an increase in murder, and the restoration of the death penalty is attributed by American authorities to be due in part to the play of party politics or to the war. In most cases the experiment was only tried for two or three years.

Switzerland abolished capital punishment in 1874, and some years later cantons were given liberty of action and 10 out of the 22 restored the death penalty. During the last forty years we have seen abolitionist and non-abolitionist cantons side by side, with murder decreasing in each and the abolitionist cantons having no more murder than those which retain capital punishment. Steps are now being taken by the Federal Government to abolish capital punishment throughout the whole country.

E. ROY CALVERT (Secretary
National Council for the Abolition of the Death
Penalty).

This question has been ventilated lately in one or two British Newspapers and I have read one article by the late Home Secretary, the present Lord Brentford, who is very much in favour of capital punishment.

It has always seemed to me that the question is one of principle and not of expediency. Says my friend: "Suppose one of your family were brutally murdered, would not you be in favour of capital punishment then?" Say I "More than that. I should probably lynch the murderer, if I had the chance and would not be afraid of the consequences."

Now that is precisely were I and others who, quite naturally think likewise, are wrong. And, in cold blood I know I am wrong. It means, in effect, that if our emotions are stirred deeply enough, the veneer of civilisation rubs off and we are apt to take the law into our own hands. More: it means that, under very great provocation, we might conceivably be willing to transgress our Lord's command to kill. Whatever the emotions, whatever the provocation, we are wrong.

And, I have never subscribed to the idea that what is wrong for the individual, is right for the State. In other words, if the killing of a human being is wrong, it is wrong if it is done by the State just as much as if it is done by the individual. Either we subscribe to the Teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, or we do not. Either we are Christian or we are not and the matter does not allow of any qualification.

£800,000 Swiss Air Budget:

Morning Post, 8th Dec.

The Federal Council has agreed to grant a credit of twenty million francs (roughly