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HOME NEWS

From the official statements just published with reference to changes in diplomatic appointments it will be noted with regret that Monsieur J. Borsinger, the Chargé d'Affaires in London, is to be transferred to Brussels; his place will be taken by Councillor Dr. von Sonnenberg, at present with the Swiss Legation in Rome.

During an inspection last week of the telephone installation at Berne it was stated that about 400 million francs were invested in the Swiss telephone service and that the gross revenue derived therefrom exceeded 90 million francs annually. The number of subscribers has now reached 182,000, i.e., 16 per 100 inhabitants; this places Switzerland fourth in the list of European states, a higher percentage being shown only by the three Scandinavian countries.

A complete severance of the existing relations between State and Church is demanded by the Socialists of Basle-Stadt. Though the two are at present separated, the citizens throughout the canton are liable to a church tax for the benefit of Protestant denominations unless a written declaration to that effect is deposited disowning allegiance to that church.

A new educational institute, a kind of university college, entitled "Romeo Manzoni" is in course of formation in the canton Ticino; this is in opposition to the one directed by the famous Ticinese poet Chiesa, who is rumoured as being influenced by political and religious considerations in the choice of his lecturers.

The realisation of the assets of the former Spar und Leikasse Diessenhofen (Thurgau) produces a dividend of only 17%, the total deficiency reaching nearly seven million francs. Depreciation of its large holding of pre-war German securities is responsible for this disastrous loss.

The lake of Locarno and the harbour of Muralto are covered with a thin sheet of ice.

The merry-making during the present carnival time has not passed off without deplorable incidents. At Diessenhofen Johann Windler, a carpenter aged 40 from Schlattingen, had visited a masked ball where during dancing he confided to an acquaintance that he had a large sum of money in his pocket. On his way home he was attacked and murdered by another workman, an Italian, who, after possessing himself of the money, dragged the body to the neighbouring railway line so as to lead to the assumption that his victim had been run over by the train.—At a masked ball at the Rothaus in Brugg, one of the dancers, Dominique Tonerati, a mechanic from Frutigen, being called to order for improper behaviour, pulled out a revolver and shot the hotel proprietor, Maurer, on the spot.

A mysterious occurrence is reported from the forest of Koppigen, on the road between Utzenstorf and Gerlafingen. Early one morning a lorry carrying workpeople was brought to a standstill by a private car occupying the centre of the road and which, in spite of hooting, would not give way. The lorry-driver, being in a hurry, with the help of some workmen, shifted the car out of the way as the two occupants were evidently asleep. The driver returned about an hour later and, finding the two motorists still in the same position, proceeded to a closer examination. He found the man at the wheel in an unconscious condition and his lady companion dead with her head resting in his lap. The motorist, who subsequently recovered at the hospital, was identified as Mr. Max Marti, a 38 years old insurance inspector residing at

Solothurn and his companion as Rosa Gyger, a restaurant employee from Saanen (Berne) in employment at the former place. A faulty exhaust pipe, giving the poisonous gas access to the coach of the car, is believed to have been the cause of the accident.

About three weeks ago nine supposed anti-Fascists were arrested at Basle in consequence of a rumour that they had arrived there with false passports to engage in a conspiracy to overthrow the present Italian régime. Preliminary police enquiries have now established the fact that they were Italian refugees unable to obtain their legitimate papers.

For having illegally stocked and subsequently disposed of, about 100lbs. of narcotic drugs, three Zurich traders were sentenced to fines aggregating Frs. 31,000, the principal receiving six days' imprisonment in addition.

A fire, supposed to have been started by a burning "Stumpen" thrown away in the attic, completely destroyed the Gasthaus zum Löwen in Rheinau (Zurich).

After two days' deliberations the Geneva courts sentenced the Bulgarian dancing instructor Parashiva Due to five years' imprisonment for having in the Kursaal shot and killed her former lover, Raymond Boissier, a scion of a well-known Genevese family; in her defence she asserted that in her despair at the promised marriage not being likely to take place, she had made up her mind to commit suicide but the shot somehow went astray.

The large farmstead known as "Praz Jouly" aux Pâquiers, near Gruyère, tenanted by the Otzot family but belonging to M. Despond, of Bulle, has been completely destroyed by fire.

The organist and choirmaster of Domdider (Fribourg), M. Gabriel Pugin, had a fatal fall when travelling on his motor-cycle; he was only 24 years of age.

SWISS NATIONAL DONATION.

To the Editor of the *Swiss Observer*.

Dear Sir,—As usual, the Swiss Federal Celebration Committee have sent to the Legation the following letter, addressed to the Swiss Clubs abroad :—

Last year our compatriots abroad again generously responded as they have always done to our appeal on behalf of the Federal collection in aid of the foundation "For the Aged," thus proving that although far from their homeland, they still hold in high esteem the foundation day of our Swiss Confederation and the motto of our forefathers, "One for all." From foreign parts we received Frs. 10,343.96 for badges, and Frs. 3,670.52 as voluntary contributions. On request we shall be glad to let donors have an itemized statement.

Our cordial thanks are due to one and all for their loyal co-operation, and particularly to our diplomatic representatives, the Legations and Consulates, for their mediation. And they are no less due to all Club councils and to all donors from far and near. For us it is always a double satisfaction to note the sympathy accorded to the efforts of the Federal Celebration Committee by our compatriots in other countries.

The result of the collection was highly satisfactory: Frs. 382,000 were handed to the institution "For the Aged," which undertook the distribution of the funds. Swiss abroad will not be deprived of its benefits, for the institution "For the Aged" will not overlook the claims of distressed Swiss in other countries.

The next collection will be in aid of the Swiss National Donation, the fund intended for distressed soldiers and their families. We feel sure that you will not withhold your sympathies from those who fell on evil days during the mobilisation and subsequently at their country's call, and you will surely help to realise Winkelried's words: "Take care of my wife and children." The collection will again take the form of a sale of Federal badges, which cost one Swiss franc each.

Could you see your way to make the appeal known to readers of the *Swiss Observer*, who will certainly be pleased to know that this year's collection will be in aid of the Swiss National Donation, the fund intended for distressed soldiers and their families.

Thanking you in advance,

I remain, dear Sir,
Yours very truly,
Swiss Legation,
8th February, 1929. J. BORSINGER.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Swiss Economic Conditions.

The steady and sustained improvement in practically all phases of Swiss economic life which has been evident during the last two years is fully brought out by the following condensed survey which appeared in *The Times* (Feb. 5th):—

"The economic situation of Switzerland improved in 1928; trade and industry were active, and general conditions were again normal after a long period of depression and economic instability. Money continued to be abundant on the Swiss market. From January to November the Federal Government, cantons, communes, and municipalities borrowed 240,895,000 fr. (£9,635,000), as against 336,461,000 fr. in 1927; the borrowings of industry amounted to 365,775,000 fr., compared with 500,361,000 fr., the interest on these various loans ranging from 4½ to 5½ per cent. The Swiss Federal Railways placed a loan of 150,000,000 fr. for conversion purposes, and 101,650,000 fr. was borrowed by foreign Governments, industrial concerns, and transport undertakings; the most important of these loans were one of 56,000,000 fr. issued by the Midi Railway Company of France, one of 25,000,000 fr. issued by German electric works, and one of 15,000,000 fr. issued by a German mining concern.

Speculation was intense during the year, with the result that the Swiss Bourses registered a record year. The average value of 110 industrial securities on the Swiss market ranged from 241 to 255 per cent., the highest figure being recorded in September; the average value of 12 Federal Government and railway securities ranged from 94.69 to 92.10 per cent., the lowest figure being registered in September. Unwise speculation in the shares of a Swiss cinema company was followed by a "break," which caused, in October, the failure of a few minor banks at Zurich.

Federal finances further improved during the year. The deficit of 14,000,000 fr. for 1927 was, in fact, reduced to 1,500,000 fr., and the estimated deficit of 9,320,000 fr. for 1928 was expected to be transformed into a surplus of about 1,500,000 fr. The Budget of 1929 estimates expenditure at 350,800,000 fr. and receipts at 352,800,000 fr., thus leaving an estimated surplus of 2,000,000 fr. This is a historic Budget, as it is the first since 1898 that shows a surplus. During 1928 the Federal Government repaid 72,500,000 fr. of loans; the Public Debt is likely to be reduced by about 13,000,000 fr., with the result that the interest to be paid in 1929 will be 800,000 fr. lower.

Passenger and goods traffic increased on the Federal Railways, and, in consequence, the financial results were expected to be highly satisfactory. For the first ten months there is a surplus of 138,951,000 fr., against only 121,821,000 fr. for the corresponding period of 1927. The first stage of the electrification of the railways is now completed, and 1,100 miles out of a total of 1,806 are electrified, the cost being 612,760,000 fr. A second stage will begin in 1929, and within a period of seven years another 162 miles will be electrified at a cost of 30,000,000 fr.

Swiss foreign trade showed a great improvement in 1928. During the first 11 months imports amounted to 2,497,400,000 fr. and exports to 1,942,200,000 fr., as against 2,080,000,000 fr. and 1,675,000,000 fr. respectively in 1927. The adverse balance of 555,200,000 fr. was made good by the receipts of the transit trade, from tourists and banking, and the export of electrical power, etc., which are estimated at about 600,000,000 fr. Imports from Great Britain were somewhat higher, being 200,018,000 fr. for the period January-November (against 172,267,000 fr. in 1927), and exports to the United Kingdom aggregated 282,351,000 fr. (against 285,680,000 fr. in 1927)."

Wages in Switzerland.

On several occasions last year we elaborated on the unfair—not to say lying—statements which have been circulated by interested parties in the English Press whenever Swiss firms competed in this country for the construction of power generating plants or the supply of electrical materials. The old bogey of lower wages is a never-failing and convenient slogan, and we are indebted to the *Rochdale Observer* (Jan. 26th) for publishing the following instructive letter from the President of the Swiss Association of Electrical Appliance Manufacturers; we only regret that such statements, based on careful investigations, do not receive a wider publicity in this country.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

CABARET AND DANCE
NEW PRINCES' RESTAURANT, PICCADILLY, W.1
Saturday, FEBRUARY 23rd, at 7 p.m.

Tickets at 12/6 (incl. Supper) may be obtained from Members of the Committee.

"The Rochdale Town Council, some months ago, debated whether a contract for electricity meters, then pending, should be given to a British or to a Swiss firm—the tender being lower in price in the case of the last named. On this occasion a member of the Council quoted that the wages in Continental factories were substantially less than in England, the difference purporting to amount to 40 per cent.

Although the body of the Council were doubtful of this statement, nevertheless, as the 'Continental factory' in this instance was obviously in Switzerland, erroneous impressions may have been gathered by the public from this debate which we would like to dispel by attracting your readers' attention to the fact that in such comparisons the term "Continent" is very often left vague and undefined or considered as a unit which includes all Continental countries as having the same conditions of labour. In fact, however, this is not the case, as the figures indicated below will prove.

Unfortunately we were unable to obtain statistical returns on the wages in the electrical manufacturing branches either from the International Labour Office or from the Swiss "Office de Travail," and are obliged to base our facts on the respective figures of the machine industry since wages and other conditions obtaining in both these branches approximate.

We enclose a statement of the average rates of pay at the beginning of 1928 in England and of Continental countries:—

Comparison shows that the hon. member of the Rochdale Council is right as far as France and Belgium are concerned. The former pays 32 to 62 per cent. lower wages for the categories mentioned than England, and Belgium 39 to 56 per cent. less. But on the other hand the rate of pay for these categories in Germany and Holland are 14 per cent. higher than in England. Obviously a mere comparison of wages between England and the 'Continent'—meaning Europe—is of little utility as the disparity in wages of the various countries is too great.

With regard to the manufacturing conditions obtaining in Switzerland. The debate was in connection with Swiss meters, so we are mainly concerned with comparisons between English and Swiss wages. In this respect the statistical figures enclosed readily show that Swiss wages for the categories mentioned average 13 per cent. higher than English wages. Although some allowance may have to be conceded for any varying conditions in certain local districts—as in each country—which may slightly affect the figures they can be accepted as a fair average.

We trust to have fully explained matters and anticipate that you will give these facts the same publicity as was given to the other report, to enable those who made the erroneous statement to have an opportunity to withdraw same. We may be excused if we point out how advisable it is for those in a position of public responsibility to only utter statements based upon facts known to them personally, because very often such assertions—which are tantamount to a reproach of dumping—discredit responsible firms of high repute, thereby causing them considerable harm."

The Tolls on Alpine Passes.

The first great step in Federal legislation and uniform application of motoring regulations has been realised by the abolition of road taxes levied by some of the cantons; the *Observer* (Feb. 3rd) refers to the event as follows:—

"The coming tourist season in Switzerland will profit from a change welcome to motorists, the abolition of the toll on Alpine passes. Since the war this toll has been levied by the Cantons of Wallis, Berne, Ticino, Unterwalden, Uri, Glarus and Grisons, either on all or some of their routes. Though this measure was opposed as unconstitutional, the Cantons declared it to be absolutely necessary for the proper upkeep of their roads, and as it lay within their power to prohibit any traffic with motor-vehicles, those interested avoided any provocative action.

Now the Federation will put one-quarter of the revenue of the petrol tax at the disposal of the Cantons on condition that they renounce any special toll on their territories. Some have already done so; others will as soon as their legislative bodies meet. The last to come into line will probably be Glarus, where the decision lies in the hands of the Landsgemeinde, which will not meet before the end of April.

The relief is considerable, as the toll paid, for instance, on such a favourite route as Grimsel-Furka-Gottard-Klausen, easily done in one day, amounted to about two pounds. Another advantage will be that the passes will now be open day and night, and not only during the office hours of the toll-bars."

Swiss Watchmakers.

The following is culled from the *Dublin Evening Mail* (Feb. 5th) and we wonder where the four Swiss watchmakers hailed from that they

could not hold their own against what on the face of it seem negligible rivals. Some consolation, however, may be drawn from the fact that the committee responsible for the selection of a suitable candidate consisted mainly of jewellers; it may also be quite on the cards that with the present flourishing state of the industry in Switzerland there is no necessity; or, in this instance, sufficient attraction for a good craftsman to seek employment abroad. From a different viewpoint it is also satisfactory to note that of the forty applications received only the four referred to came from Switzerland; and, in view of the lines on which the Dublin Technical Education Committee proposes to run this "apprenticeship class," there is little likelihood of competition being created which would seriously affect our own staple industry.

"The four Swiss applicants were brought over specially to undergo this examination, their expenses being paid by the Technical Committee. It will doubtless be a source of pride to the craft of watchmaking in Dublin to hear that the Committee, after a most careful and impartial examination of all the applicants, selected Mr. Sean O'Kelly, a Dublin watchmaker. The commencing salary is £400 a year, without war bonus; the office will be a whole-time one, and not pensionable. Mr. O'Kelly got to work straight away, and an elaborate watchmaking equipment was installed at the Technical Schools. The Dublin jewellers have been good enough to offer certain material which, though of little use to them, will be of great value to the new class for experimental purposes.

Watchmaking will be taught, not at the evening classes, but at a special day apprentice class. Pupils will be taken on as vacancies arise. They will be paid 6/- a week for the first year, 8/- a week for the next, and the jewellers of Dublin have agreed to take them on as improvers during the third year and allow them to serve the rest of their apprenticeship on the terms recognised by the trade."

Women and the Cresta Run.

Here is another isolated protest against the recent decision of the St. Moritz Tobogganing Club debarring women from using the famous run; it is written by a member of the weaker sex and is taken from the *Manchester Guardian* (Feb. 8th):—

"It is surprising that there has not been more criticism from the many women who are expert at winter sports of the recent decision of the St. Moritz Tobogganing Club to close the Cresta Run to women. Personally, although I practise winter sports with enthusiasm whenever I get the chance, I cannot claim expertness. But this question of the St. Moritz ruling appeared to me rather a matter of principle than of special knowledge; and, having my own opinion on the affair, it has been interesting to question several of the only now-returning experts, and to find them in unanimous agreement that the prohibition is absurd.

Any discussion of the bar brings, of course, under review the whole question of women in winter sports. What are women doing, and what are they going on to do, in these thrilling, unsafe games of the snow and ice, in which they are comparatively newcomers? In skating they have always held their own, and with the reform of skating dress they have surpassed themselves in grace and prowess. As for ski-ing, one has only to look at the early (but still recent) photographs of women ski-ers to marvel at women being able to do more than shuffle along on the level, hampered as they were until a short time ago by ankle-length skirts, waists, and hairpins. Yet it is Dame Katharine Furse, a woman no longer in her first youth and certainly familiar with these impedimenta, who takes the lead as a first-class ski-er to-day, and the younger women, by all accounts, are coming along fast. In essentials, except for the element of danger, ski-ing seems to be on a parallel with tennis. In skill and swiftness there are no limits to a woman's attainment, though in strength it seems certain that men will always have the advantage.

Where there is the element of danger, of course, the difference in muscular force and endurance may easily be crucial. This is admitted and allowed for. It has, however, been found no reason for debarring women from going as far and as hard as they can on their skis. Women must be allowed to judge or discover for themselves in open competition just how far they can go. It is conceivable that any day an unusual woman might appear whose strength was equal to a man's in the needful respects, and it would be ridiculous that she should find the way closed to her at any given point. That women ski-ers have so far perceived their limitations quite clearly is evidenced by the fact that they have refrained tacitly as a sex from any participation in ski-jumping. They are aware that the female frame is normally unsuited to this most terrific of sports. So severe is the impact of the landing that spines are

easily broken, and the least of mishaps may include three or four successive and violent somersaults, skis and all, down the frozen slope. The hardest, most practised male jumper cannot often continue after thirty, gives up jumping upon marriage, is lucky if he is not shaken to pieces and afflicted for the rest of his life with nerves and heart trouble. Women are not fools. So far there has been no need to rule them out from ski-jumping, and it is hard to see any such need arising. There might, now and again, be a successful, unshockable, and freakish female jumper. For the rest, if a woman may fly, either as pilot or as passenger on a dangerous 'plane journey, why hinder her from risking her neck in the air with a pair of skis?

Yet the most dangerous toboggan run in the world has suddenly been denied to all but male riders. An ambulance stands at the bottom of the Cresta all the time to pick up the breakages. So far nothing but male breakages have been picked up. Women have not asked to ride the Cresta. They do not like the look of that ambulance, nor of the performance (for themselves) even at its most successful. Yet it is both natural and just that they should object, and object strongly, to this new formal ruling that they must not ride the Cresta. They feel, rightly, that it may be left to them to decide about that, and that the stringent regulations with regard to barring all dangerous riders ought to be enough for women as well as for men. Hitherto it has been enough, not only in ski-ing and tobogganing, but in the often highly perilous bobsleighbing on famous bob runs. There seems to have been no provocation from the women. It is merely a piece of authoritative fussiness, and as such is justly resented. Not only this, but it is likely to prove itself provocative in a manner that will foil its own alleged motive of restraint. The sooner, in fact, that the St. Moritz Tobogganing Club sees fit to rescind its impertinent by-law the better for all concerned."

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The net profit earned by the Swiss Bank Corporation for the year ended 31st of December, 1928, together with the carry forward from the previous year, amounts to \$644,200 against £557,227 for 1927.

At the Annual General Meeting, to take place on the 28th February, the Board will recommend the allocation of £20,000 to the Pension Fund, and of £40,000 to the Reserve Fund for the extension of the Head Office premises in Basle; they further propose to pay a dividend of 8% as for the preceding year, to place £80,000 to the Reserve Fund, which will thus reach a total of £1,760,000, and to carry forward £28,610.

Acting upon the authority given by the Extraordinary General Meeting of the 17th of October, 1927, the Board have decided to issue 40,000 shares of Frs. 500 each, thus increasing the paid-up capital from Frs. 140,000,000 to Frs. 160,000,000. The new shares, which will rank for the full dividend for the current year, will be offered to shareholders at Frs. 625 per share in proportion to their existing holding.

THE TWELFTH ANNUAL SWISS SAMPLES FAIR will be held at **BÂLE** 13th to 23rd April, 1929.

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or to:

THE SWISS BANK CORPORATION,
99, Gresham Street, E.C.2; or at Bâle.

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