

Notes and gleanings

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HOME NEWS



FEDERAL.

RESIGNATION OF FELIX CALONDER.

The President of the German-Polish Arbitration Commission for Oberschlesien, Felix Calonder, a former Federal Councillor, has tendered his resignation to the Secretary of the League of Nations. This is the second resignation of high Swiss Officials in important international positions within a month, the first being that of Prof. M. Huber from the International Court of Justice at the Hague. M. Calonder who is in his 67th year is well known to the Swiss Colony, being a hon. member of the City Swiss Club and Swiss Mercantile Society.

SWISS LOAN CONVERSION.

The Federal Council has decided not to proceed with the redemption on March 1, 1931, of the Federal five per cent. 1917 loan, the total issue of which amounted to 150,000,000 Swiss francs, but to convert it into a similar loan at 4 per cent. The conversion operations will take place during the first half of next month.

NEW MOUNTAIN RAILWAY.

The possibility of a mountain railway to the top of the Bernina is under consideration. The terminus would be situated at an altitude higher than that of the Gornergrat, and of the Jungfraujoeh.

SWISS RAILWAY RESULTS.

The Swiss Federal Railways Department give the total receipts for all Swiss railways during 1929 as 573.05 million francs, which is 15.9 million francs more than the preceding year. The greatest advance is noted in the mountain railways and funicular lines, whose increase corresponds to 2.9 per cent. as against 2.6 per cent. for the Federal State Railway. During the month of June the Swiss Federal Railways transported 12,047,000 passengers, being 1,400,000 more than during the corresponding month last year. This record number of passengers has never previously been attained on the Swiss railways. In 1920, the number of passengers carried was 80,000,000; in 1928, 100,000,000; and last year, 126,500,000. It is anticipated that a number above 130,000,000 will be attained for the present year.

NEW TELEGRAPH FACILITIES.

As a result of an interpellation by the Commercial Travellers Association in Switzerland, the telegraph authorities have decided that in future inland telegrams may be handed to the conductors and guards on the Swiss Railways to be transmitted to the recipient by telephone, if the number is quoted and the telegram headed "Telephone." It is proposed to charge a uniform tax of 1.50 Frs. for the maximum number of 15 words. N.Z.Z.

LONDON HONOURS FOR SWISS PROFESSORS.

On the occasion of the 11th International Congress of Veterinary Surgeons in London, representatives of several countries were nominated as Honorary Associates of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, amongst others the Swiss Professors Dr. W. Frei (Zurich) and Dr. M. Bürgi (Bern). N.Z.Z.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The Great Town Council of Zurich has decided to present the Polytechnicum, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of that institution, with a sum of 100,000 Frs. to enable it to grant scholarships to deserving students. The fund which has been started for that purpose will form the completion of the social work which was begun with the erection of a Students' Home.

During the 75 years of its existence the Polytechnicum has educated men who have done eminent work at home and abroad. It is, therefore, with pride that the federal as well as the town authorities look upon the federal Polytechnicum. In industrial and private circles funds are now collected to be presented to this institution to enable it to extend its scientific researches. N.Z.

A record flight was made by the airman Mittelholzer who, in company with the director of the Ad Astra Aero Co., flew from Zurich to Berlin in 3 hours. This is the more remarkable as the whole flight was undertaken in a severe rain-storm which lasted all the way. The same evening Mittelholzer was present at the first showing of his Africa film. N.Z.Z.

BERNE.

Some interesting figures have been drawn up by the Bernese statistical office.

In all 186 Hire-purchase Agreements were registered for Private motor cars during 1929. The total purchase price amounts to 1,296,000 Frs. or about 7,000 Frs. per car. Of this amount 302,000 Frs. has been paid as deposit or on an average 23 per cent.

On the other hand it is shown how the rent of flats has increased, although the cost of building has decreased. In 1919 the index figure of building costs was 276, rent index 119; in 1924, cost index 199, rent index 181; in 1929, cost index 169, rent index 194. V.

LUCERNE.

The Town Council of Lucerne has made a proposal to the Grand Town Council to buy the piece of land called "Dreilinden" to prevent one of the finest views of the town being spoiled by buildings. A neighbour, whose residence borders on this estate and who would be greatly inconvenienced if this land were built over, has offered to pay half the purchase price of 76,000 Frs. N.Z.Z.

AARGAU.

As elsewhere, the industrial crisis is felt in the canton of Aargau; the branch factory of Viscoe in Rheinfelden has shut down and 500 workers are faced with unemployment. The cantonal government, in a circular letter, has asked all the communes to do their utmost to provide work for the unemployed through the coming winter months and to start at once with work which will have to be done sooner or later so as to relieve the sufferers to some extent. V.

The Managing Director and principal Shareholder of the watch factory Optina A.G., M. Franz Peter, who disappeared without trace in the middle of June, taking with him goods to the value of 80,000 Frs., has been arrested in Monte Video. The larger part of the goods was recovered. The demand for extradition is pending. N.Z.Z.

NEUCHÂTEL.

The dispute between the management and the workmen of the "Zenith" Watch Company in Le Locle, which was reported in our last number, has been settled.

THURGAU.

A memorial tablet was unveiled at the entrance to the cemetery in Horn in honour of the two aviators Oscar Kaeser and Kurt Luescher who last year attempted to fly the Atlantic. This tablet was presented by Flight-lieutenant Imhof, a friend of Kaeser, who was with him on his India flight. The inscription reads as follows: "In memory of Oscar Kaeser, pilot, born 17th of June 1907, who met with an accident near the Azores on August 19th, 1929, together with his comrade Kurt Luescher, born September 30, 1908. St.G.T. (See "An Anniversary" on another page.)

VAUD.

The death of Colonel James Quinlet took place at Lausanne at the age of 66. The deceased was Instructor of Infantry and Commandant of the 20th Brigade since 1920.

AVANCHES.

The district court of Avanches had before it Mrs. Alberti Villars, Dr. jur Alberti Villars and the garage proprietor Charles Soland from Fribourg, who were accused of poaching. The offence was committed one Sunday evening last autumn, when the three accused went on a poaching expedition in a motor car. Mrs. Villars was fined 100 Frs. and 1/5 of the costs of the prosecution, Dr. jur Villars, lawyer in Fribourg, to 500 Frs. fine, five years deprivation of civil rights and 2/5 of the costs, whilst Soland was fined 300 Frs., 3 years loss of civil rights and 2/5 of the costs. St. G.T.

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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

Holidays are in full swing and every now and then one meets friends who have just returned from some lovely spot and look all the better for the temporary absence from their every-day occupation. Now that the weather seems to have settled somewhat—while I am writing this old King Sol shines beautifully from a cloudless sky—readers must not be surprised to find that Kyburg too has at long last shaken the dust of London from his shoes and flitted away to where the mountains and lakes of his beloved native country will revive his flagging energy and imbue him again with fresh vigour and new zest. So "an revoir" my dear readers and let's hope the weather will keep!

Bare Backs.

Sun-bathing has come to stay and, within limits, will yet prove to be one of the finest curatives for numberless ills to which the human body is heir. Funny situations are bound to arise here and there and the following from the *Leeds Mercury*, 19th August, is rather good, I think:

The German cult of sun-bathing in "next to nothing" is, I find, being eagerly followed by English visitors on the Continent. While on holiday in one of the German Cantons of Switzerland I noticed that new arrivals from England first viewed the bare backs with amusement, then quickly followed suit.

For rowing on the lakes the men wore only the shortest of bathing drawers, and when their white skins had tanned a deep golden brown the fashion looked most attractive.

Manual labourers were also naked from the waist upwards, and the many touring cyclists one saw invariably wore nothing but a thin cotton vest, sleeveless and cut low in neck, with shorts.

In the South, where the sun is exceptionally hot, sun bathing is a serious business. Those who wish to tan quickly may be seen religiously oiling the exposed parts from time to time and then giving themselves up to the sun's rays.

Lying in deck chairs, face downwards on the imported sand by the lakeside, or stretched out on the rafts, they will stay throughout the day, and it is no exaggeration to say that some of the devotees are actually annoyed if your shadow falls on them for any length of time. One can have meals, of course, on the terrace of the Lido—the bathing places in most Continental resorts are named after the famous plage near Venice—still wearing a bathing costume or pyjamas.

A rather amusing incident happened to us when my brother, after sun-bathing for a while, went into the water and then decided to dress.

Immediately he seated himself in his chair again an attendant excitedly informed him that he could not sit there dressed. So my brother had to go, an outcast, because he had on a cricket shirt and flannel trousers.

I have heard of people being turned away because of undress, but never before for being dressed.

The Glory of La Gruyere.

Sunday Referee, 17th August:

There is a little but world-famous village in Switzerland where brides still receive cheese as a dowry, and where fortunes are not reckoned in francs, pounds, or dollars, but in the number of cheese rounds which each individual may store in his cellars at a yearly average.

This little village is La Gruyère, where millions of gallons of the purest Swiss milk are turned into round shapes of cheese every year, each weighing between 80lb. and 90lb., and each being worth £5 on an average. Every house in La Gruyère has a well-ventilated cellar, with wooden racks where the cheese is stored, and everyone in the village knows with wonderful accuracy how much his neighbour is worth in cheese, and therefore in money.

There are in the district several cheese millionaires whose cellars easily contain many thousands of tons of cheese; there is a "middle bourgeoisie" whose daughters receive as a marriage dowry between 50 and 500 rounds of cheese.

There are no poor in the district; everybody can make enough cheese to give him an income sufficient to live in comfort.

The Mayor of La Gruyère is M. Glasson, who proudly showed me a real catacomb of never-ending rounds of freshly made cheese. "Even brilliants and pearls know their ups and downs," he said while discussing matters with me, "and everybody knows that they quickly depreciate after a financial crisis; but cheese seldom moves: it is a staple article of consumption all over the world. We could sell ten times more cheese than what we can produce, but real Gruyère, like real champagne, is limited to a very narrow producing district. There are hundreds of imitations, but the genuine cheese is still exported all over the world."

"You may be interested to learn that it was Gruyère cheese that saved Swiss watch manufacturers in their tariff war against the United States—America wanted to raise their tariff walls against our watchmakers. It was a general alarm; it might have meant ruin for Switzerland. The watchmakers came to us and we told America: 'Unless you open your doors to our watches we shall shut ours to any export of Gruyère cheese.' Now, Americans can produce a lot of wonderful things, but they cannot produce Gruyère, and their housewives would have been all up in arms if we had failed to supply them with our produce. They had to agree to meet us with regard to our watch trade, and we promised to continue to export our cheese."

"I do not know who invented our cheese, but mention of it has been found in an old manuscript of the seventeenth century, therefore it must have been as early as that. Our peasants are very jealous of the secret of their manufacture. There is a secret which, of course, every family keeps jealously as a valuable heirloom, but the real great secret is in the wonderful quality of the grass grown on our mountains which provides a milk unique in the world. The Germans and the Italians have tried to produce the same cheese, but they have not succeeded and they never will. Their cheese is almost tasteless, with extra large holes and soft. Ours, on the contrary, is very tasty, with small holes and firm."

"We can differentiate our cheese from any other similar one made in the world, and I could tell you even the age of it almost by touch. When our boys and girls marry it is usual for the parents to arrange how many rounds of cheese each of them will bring into the marriage settlement, and empty cellars are a very unusual exception in our valley where unemployment is unknown and where modes of life have changed little from those of hundreds of years ago."

Cheese is nearly always an inspiration, one might say, and I am not surprised that Camembert, evidently in excellent condition, has inspired "Lucio" to write the following in the *Manchester Guardian's Weekly*, for August 22:—

Forge a cheque or forge a fiver,
And your sin may be excused;
To the wretch that lacks a stiver
Pardon may not be refused;
Forge a "genuine Old Master,"
Fake it with determined care,
But avoid one foul disaster—
Do not forge a Camembert.

Forge a fiddle or viola,
Forge a Strad with antique touch;
Forge the cheese of Gorgonzola,
Forge that fearful stuff called Dutch;
Forge with polished skill and slowly
Jacobean chest or chair,
But one work of art is holy—
Do not forge a Camembert.

Leave its noble realm unraided,
Don't infringe this copyright;
So that I may still, unaided,
Recognise the brand at sight(?),
Saying, as its ripe aroma
Hangs upon the humid air,
"Nay, I need no signed diploma—
This, I trow, is Camembert."

On the other hand, it must be admitted that cheese when not in condition, is an abomination and may easily lead to trouble and acrimonious discussion in the best of families. Also, cheese often induces violent tempers and may—has been known to!—even produce homicidal tendencies in its wake! In countries like England, where strong cheese is not really a home grown product, or then, like Stilton, produced at certain seasons only, the use of fire-arms is rightly restricted, because of that tendency of strong cheese, of foreign make, to induce murderous feelings. But abroad, where fire-arms are so frequently used to settle domestic differences and where the gentle art of shooting in such cases is more appreciated, the selection of appropriate fire-arms, to suit the occasion, to match the user, to blend with the fair user's colour scheme, is of some importance. "Lucio" in the afore-mentioned *Manchester Guardian Weekly* has recognised this and he admonishes his readers, as follows:

If you wish to settle neatly
With a husband who's a tax,
Do approach the job discreetly—
Do not hit him with an axe.
Though the business may be shady
Do not make it merely vile—
There are weapons, gracious lady,
More in keeping with your style.
Though he may require a lesson
And his manners may revolt,
Do not use a Smith and Wesson
Or the larger breed of Colt;
Take a dainty automatic
To inflict the deadly blow—
These are equally emphatic
And distinctly *comme il faut*.
For remember—his removal
Must be managed in a way
That will meet with the approval
Of the polished world and gayer.
Don't forget your style and station
In a passing mood of pique—
Let the lad's assassination
Be achieved with proper *chic*!

But, lest it be thought that Kyburg has eaten too much cheese lately and therefore has become blood-thirsty himself, I will now pass on to other subjects. Especially as it is getting rather hot to-day and the temperature will surely go over 80 in the shade so as to provide our industrious newspaper chappies with some more records!

Restricting Motor Coach Capacities.

Commercial Motor, August 12th:
Motor coaches are useful. They alone make it possible for vast multitudes of people to see the country, to enjoy the beautiful scenery, to spend a day in the open air and to travel from one place to another in comparative comfort, cheapness and with speed. They also make it possible for the authorities to build huge motor roads, because if the latter were built for the private motor-car owners only, there would soon be a great outcry concerning the colossal sums spent on such roads and for the pleasure of the well-to-do only! Think of that, next time you are annoyed because a gigantic motor coach is travelling in front of you and at over 40 m.p.h.! Alpine roads in Switzerland, of course, have their peculiarities and one of them is that narrow and fairly dangerous bends cannot be eliminated always. There is, therefore, some strong point in the following:

Considerable discussion has lately arisen in Swiss motor-coaching circles owing to a regulation recently issued by the authorities of the Canton of Uri. This ruling prohibits the use of motor coaches with seating capacities for more than 23 passengers. Efforts are being made to induce the authorities to cancel or modify the regulation, which, if insisted upon, will put out of service a large number of 40-seater vehicles.

A Daring Experiment.

Some time last year, I believe, I gave some news re. Monte Generoso lightning catching experiment. *The Scotsman's Weekly*, August 16th, now writes:

Described as a scientific experiment which may revolutionise the world's economy, there will shortly be attempted on Monte Generoso, on the Italian side of the Alps, an experiment to disintegrate the atom into elements by two German electricians, Professor Arnold Brasch and Doctor Fritz Lange, says a message from Rome. The two scientists have built an original electrical station on Monte Generoso with the object of attracting atmospheric electricity into a specially prepared tube, stated to be the result of years of experiment, and capable of resisting the enormous voltage deriving from the discharge of storm clouds.

The Germans have stated in the Milan Press that the potential difference between a storm cloud and earth reaches as much as 100,000,000 volts at the moment of the lightning flash, while the most powerful electric generation stations do not produce more than 2,000,000 volts. The experiment may reveal nothing or everything. It may, perhaps, open the door to an immense discovery in the use of atomic energy, but contains a big element of chance. The Germans themselves stated in the Press, "We do not know what will happen. We are rather in the position of the first man who lit a fire."

I hope these scientists won't meet with the fate that awaited Prometheus!

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