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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

INTERNATIONAL BANK TREATY RATIFIED.

The extraordinary session of the Federal Parliament of the 24th and 25th of February has resulted in the practically unanimous acceptance of the state treaty for the establishment of the International Bank at Basle. The States Council voted for the treaty without dissentient and in the National Council only two Communists stood out with foolish speeches opposing the eminently satisfactory proposition. On the 26th the Federal Council ratified the treaty for the duration of 15 years on the strength of the Parliamentary vote. The document of ratification has been deposited with the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs at Paris. The second treaty providing for permanent duration can only be ratified in three months' time after the period for demanding a referendum has lapsed.

THE 20 MILLIONS CREDIT FOR THE SWISS AIR FORCE.

The committee of the States Council appointed to deal with the proposal to buy 105 military aeroplanes of a new type at a cost of 20 million francs recommends its acceptance unanimously. In the committee of the National Council the three Socialist members have opposed the proposal as has the Social-Democratic Party as a whole. It is protesting against new military expenditure being incurred at a time when strenuous efforts are being made internationally to reduce armaments. It further protests against the proposal being declared urgent so that no popular vote may be demanded on it. With the latter criticism a good many Radicals agree as there is clearly no case of real emergency. At a meeting in Zurich Federal Councillor Motta stressed the fact that Switzerland has undertaken to effectively defend her frontiers when by the "London Declaration" of 1920 our neutrality was guaranteed anew.

NEW ITALIAN MINISTER.

The new Italian Minister for Switzerland, Giovanni Marchi, has submitted his credentials to the Federal Government. Originally a journalist he was for some years Italian Minister at the Hague. The new post in Switzerland is his second diplomatic appointment.

THE SWISS IN ITALY.

In reply to a question submitted last autumn by National Councillor Dr. Pfister (St. Gall) regarding the better protection of our compatriotes working in Italy the Federal Council declares that our representatives in Rome have received reassuring statements regarding the new regulations. Our Government will carefully watch the effect of those regulations on our Nationals.

EXTENSIONS OF THE POLYTECHNICUM AT ZURICH.

The Government has approved the report regarding considerable extensions of amenities at the Federal Technical High School in Zürich to be submitted to Parliament.

LIBERAL—DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS.

The Annual Congress of the Liberal-Democratic Party Delegates has been fixed for the 23rd of March to be held at Berne.

LOCAL.

URI.

Bridge-Guard Martin Epp of Flüelen, who spent 33 years in the service of the Steamboat Company, was cutting wood above the Axenstrasse, between Tellspalte and Flüelen, when he slipped and fell over the precipice on to the Axenstrasse. He had such severe head injuries that he expired within a few minutes. N.Z.Z.

SCHWYZ

After a stormy political campaign, Dr. Karl Birchler (Liberal) was elected Landschreiber in succession to the late Anton Kälin (Conservative). Although the Conservative Party is the strongest political party in the Canton, their candidate lost by over 200 votes, a surprising rout under the circumstances. N.Z.Z.

BASLE.

The Basle Mission regrets to state that according to a wire received from Hong-Kong, and contrary to reports which have appeared in the press, the two missionaries Walter and Fischele from Basle, who are kept prisoners by bandits, have not yet been released. It is, however, hoped that fresh negotiations with the bandits will be successful. T.G.

The well-known amateur racing cyclist Schluempf died in hospital from the effects of a street-accident.

Dr. E. Handschin, Professor of Entomology at the Basle University, goes to Java for two years on behalf of the Australian Government. He will be in charge of laboratories for the study of carriers of certain cattle diseases and the means of combating them. Basle University has granted Professor Handschin leave of absence for the two years; they are greatly pleased with the honour rendered to him by this call on his services.

The strike at Affoer, Christen & Cie., Ltd., continues, thanks to Communistic elements who ignore the Socialist's decision to resume work. Latterly the molestation of non-strikers has become a daily occurrence and has necessitated strong police protection. N.

SOLEURE.

The Bill providing for the supply free of charge of text books in the Bezirksschulen, as well as the Bill granting some tax reliefs, were accepted by the citizens by majorities of 2,989 and 5,999 votes respectively.

The inhabitants of the town of Solothurn have voted for the purchase of the premises of a former watch-factory for 135,000 Frs. to house the municipal watchmakers school. N.Z.Z.

Mr. Gunziger, dealer in cattle, died at Solothurn from injuries received in an accident. During a business errand he slipped on a stony path and fell into the Pichoux gorge. St. G.T.

FRIBOURG.

Shortly after having left the station at Fribourg a goods train was derailed, killing the guard instantly. An assistant guard owes his life to having jumped clear before the wagons were thrown off the line. T.G.

NEUCHATEL.

The watchmaking industry has suffered a severe blow by a telegram received in La Chaux-de-Fonds from the American customs authorities to the effect that a huge consignment is being held up.

The consignment consists of parts and works which was made in order to escape the duty of 40 per cent. on watches. The American authorities, however, maintain that the same taxation applies to imports of parts and are now claiming a fine in addition to the full duty. T.G.

AARAU.

At Küttigen Mrs. Frey-Basler, aged 60, fell from the hay loft into the barn and fractured her skull. She died in hospital at Aarau. Her husband is a cripple and totally unable to work owing to an accident sustained 3 years ago. St. G.T.

GRAUBUENDEN.

Three German skiers, a lady and two men, left the Boral hut to ascend the Bernina, going over the "Loch" and the "Buch" towards the Crast Aggüza saddle; on the plateau above the "Buch" the foremost of the party fell into a deep crevasse. Unfortunately their rope broke under the strain. The two survivors tried in vain to establish communication with their comrade. The alarm was given, and his body was later recovered by a salvage column. N.Z.Z.

VALAIS.

Guide Hermann Perren, aged 68, of Zermatt, and Miss Ecker, of Lucerne, while descending from the Breithorn fell through a Schneewächte and were killed. Another party noticed the accident and immediately endeavoured to bring help. As the two had fallen to a depth of 25 metres, the rope available was, however, too short. Salvage columns, including a team of expert skiers, were at once mobilised; but they could only recover the bodies. It is a strange fact that Perren met with an accident on the Breithorn once before, when he and a companion fell into a crevasse. At that time, Perren had to spend 12 days beside his dead comrade, before he was rescued. Perren was one

of the best-known Zermatt guides and had 140 ascents of the Matterhorn to his credit. N.Z.Z.

TICINO.

The castle of Trevano, near Lugano, which was built about 50 years ago by a Russian prince who spent over 12 millions on it, has been bought by a Zurich concern which intends to transform it into a first-class hotel with 300 beds. The purchase price was only Frs. 800,000. T.G.

WINTER SPORTS LIMERICKS.

In response to his offer of a box of cigarettes for the best Limerick submitted on Alpine Sports, "Kyburg" has received the following:—

Dear "Kyburg,"

In case you get no other answers to your request for Limericks these will be the best! Dans le pays des avengles, les borgnes sont rois! In that hope, I might suggest your giving the prize to Mr. G. J. as I don't smoke. Yours truly,

(Mile.) ELISE FISCHER.

There was a young man at Mürren,
Whose rig-out was decidedly "furren,"
But in spite of his clothes,
Down he came on his nose,
That beautifully dress't young man at Mürren,
When I went to great Arosa
Quite suddenly there arose a

Terrible foehn. Melted snow,
Awful damp, nowhere to go,
That's what I got at great Arosa.
Said a swarthy young man at Davos,
Who hailed from distant African Lagos:—
"Really this is better far
Than to work, and fight, and spar;
We have universal peace at Davos."

RARE SWISS STAMP IN A LONDON SALE.

One of the rarest stamps of Europe will come up for auction next month at Glendining's, when a big specialised collection of Switzerland is to be dispersed. This is the curiosity known as the "double Geneva."

Before the first issue by the Swiss federal administration on April 5, 1850, stamps were issued by several of the cantons for their own use. They were, in fact, among the first foreign governments to copy Great Britain's innovation of the penny post, with letters prepaid instead of paid for on delivery, as had previously been the case. The credit for this is apparently due to a Professor de Candolle, who was in London when Rowland Hill was carrying his scheme for a penny post to success.

The cantonal government of Geneva, however, found a difficulty in the existing two rates of postage. For purely local letters to be delivered in the same commune or town, 5 centimes was charged, and for letters between different communes in the canton, 10 centimes. How they got over the difficulty will be seen in the illustration.

The stamps, bearing the arms of the canton, were designed in pairs, each pair being tied together by a strip across the top with the inscription: "Port cantonal 10 cent." For letters from one part of the canton to another, then, the pair was used.

If the letter writer was writing to someone in the same commune he divided the pair with scissors, cut off the strip, and was left with two stamps, each inscribed "Port local 5 cent."

The stamps were lithographed by M. Schmidt, of Geneva, and printed on green paper. They were placed on sale on October 1, 1843. For some reason the Genevans did not take to stamps like the English, but preferred to keep to payment on delivery, and about six months later the postal department actually introduced a "sail price," a discount of one centime being allowed on each single stamp. Even this expedient was not effective.

As far as can be ascertained, only about 30,000 pairs were printed, and as most of these were set up for local postage, the pairs are exceedingly scarce, the catalogue value being £200 used.

Occasionally pairs are found divided the wrong way; that is to say, they are really the right-hand stamp of one pair and the left-hand stamp of the next joined together. Catalogue values of these unused, are between £300 and £400. Yet it is interesting to find that in the early days of stamp collecting, philatelists were suspicious of this issue and often refused to touch it.

IAN LAWRENCE in *The Bazaar*.