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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

GAS WARFARE.

Federal Councillor Minger, the head of the Military Department has taken the initiative in arranging a conference for the purpose of discussing means to be adopted for protecting the civil population against chemical warfare. The conference which will take place on November 9th in the session hall of the National Council will be attended by about 200 delegates representing apart from the leaders of the political parties municipal authorities, trade and agricultural organisations and scientific and philanthropic institutions which have interested themselves in this problem. The deliberations will be confined to a "passive protection," the active defence falling in the domain of the army and will follow the lines of: a thorough instruction of the people about the dangers of these gases so as to prevent panics; the organisation of an intelligence and alarm service; the creation of adequately prepared shelters (Cellars) where people would have to take refuge and measure for the prompt assistance to gas victims and the neutralisation of affected areas.

A PROTEST AGAINST REDUCTIONS IN SALARIES.

At a conference held in Zurich of section-presidents of the Schweiz. Kaufmännischen Verein a resolution was passed unanimously protesting against the arbitrary reduction of salaries in some large undertakings which continued to pay high dividends and lordly tantièmes.

IMPORTANT CHANGES IN THE SWISS ARMY.

The Federal Council has appointed Colonel Ulrich Wille "Chef d'Arme" of the Infantry in place of Colonel de Lorol, who retires at the end of this month. Colonel Wille, who is 44 years of age, is a son of the late General Wille. M. Renzo Lardelli, born in 1876 in Poschiavo has been appointed commandant of the fifth division.

EMBROIDERY TRADE.

It is reported that the fall in the rate of sterling will cause a loss of about £120,000 to the Swiss embroidery industry, which had orders from Great Britain to a total of £400,000.

FOOTBALL.

Last Sunday's matches brought no change in the relative position of the leading clubs. In the National League Young Fellows and Zurich still occupy top places in the first group and Aarau and Etoile Carouge in the second group. Grasshoppers have improved their position by their win over Nordstern of six to one. Servette won their first match of the season by beating Solothurn with four goals to one. Some of the clubs (Basel, Berne and St. Gall) are still without a win.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The death has occurred, at the age of ninety, in Zurich, of Mr. Emile Dreyfus, a well-known political and social worker in Switzerland.

* * *

A patriotic café proprietor stopped a run on a nearby bank by putting a barrel of beer outside the bank with a notice "Free drinks for those who have not gone mad!" According to the story, the anxious depositors quaffed their glass of beer and straightway went home again.

* * *

The wellknown Tailoring firm, G. Uebersax at the Limmatquai has celebrated the 25th Anniversary of its foundation.

BERNE.

The death is reported of Mr. A. Godet, Editor and Chief of the "Schweizerische Depeschen Agentur" at the age of 47.

As successor to the late M. J. Ruckstuhl, General Manager of the Banque Populaire, M. Alfred Hirs, Sub Manager to the General Management of the National Bank has been elected. The General Management of the Popular Bank consists now of Messrs. Dr. H. Stadlin, R. Steiger and H. Hirs.

LUCERNE.

The prevailing anxiety about the safety of money has had a tragicomic consequence. Misguided by rumours a lady rushed to her bank and withdrew her savings of about Frs. 2,000 in small banknotes. She secreted her treasure temporarily away in the sitting-room stove which seemed to be the receptacle for occasional wastepaper. Fate would have it that during her absence the chimney sweeper called and the maid in order to assist his task set the contents of the oven on fire.

GENEVE.

The season of the municipal theatre has terminated with a substantial deficit the town fathers being faced with supplementary credits of about Frs. 45,000 in spite of the initial subsidy of Frs. 100,000. The discouraging result is attributed to the competition of the cinema and wireless; the existing contract with the director has been prematurely cancelled.

WALLIS.

States Councillor Oskar Walpen was the victim of an accident last week at Martigny; in a vain endeavour to board a moving train he lost his footing, fell on the permanent track and was literally cut into two by the carriage wheels. Oskar Walpen, who recently has been much in the limelight in connection with a slander affair, has had a most successful political career; he has occupied at one time or another practically all the high administrative offices of his canton and when still a university student was elected a member of the Grand Conseil. He was only 49 years old and leaves a widow and four children.

GRISON.

On the Chur-Landquart-Klosters-Davos-Filisur section of the Rhaetian Railway the construction at Klosters of a new station, a concrete viaduct over the river, and a short tunnel, has enabled a through run from Chur to Filisur to be obtained, and the old terminal station at Klosters to be dispensed with. A Mitropa Restaurant Car now works daily on the 10.50 a.m. from Chur to Davos Platz, returning on the 4.40 p.m. ex-Davos Platz. This facility, the first such working on record over this section, will not apply for the period of July 1 to September 10 inclusive.

The construction of the first section of the Davos Dorf-Wasserscheide funicular was begun on June 8. It is anticipated that when the whole railway is completed, a heavy traffic will be carried in winter, as the top station at Wasserscheide will be just above, and close to, the famous Parsenn ski-ing fields, which are considered by many to be the finest in Switzerland. The chief work of the lower section is the boring of a tunnel, some two or three hundred yards in length, through what appears to be solid rock; this will be entered immediately on leaving the bottom station at Davos Dorf (5,200 feet above sea level).

CITY SWISS CLUB.

PLEASE RESERVE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20th

for the

ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL,

at the

May Fair Hotel, Berkeley Square, W.1.

CK's CORNER.

The establishment of Pommery and Greno is situated in a park in the suburbs of Reims on the Suippe Road. The buildings have been practically rebuilt since the war as they were only 1,500 metres from the front lines and consequently were destroyed by gunfire. The cellars, which are really galleries, some of which were in existence in gallo-roman times, are 30 metres below the surface and extend for about 18 kilometres.

The wine of Champagne, a relatively small district in the neighbourhood of Reims, was known as far back as the VIth century, but it was not until the end of the 17th century that a Benedictine, Dom Pérignon, discovered the secret of preserving the gas so as to produce the sparkling wine which we know to-day under the name of champagne.

Its manufacture is a complicated process. After the "vendange," that is to say in autumn, the juice of the grape is put into barrels and left to ferment for about three months. The wines which result are then blended so as to produce a "cuvee" of the desired composition. In the following spring the wine is put into bottles, a small quantity of cane sugar added and the bottles are stored in the cellars where they remain untouched for about four years.

At the end of this time, the wine has matured and a slight deposit has formed. To get rid of this deposit, the bottles are placed in racks, neck downwards, there to remain for about three months, and are gently rotated daily about a quarter of a circle, so that at the end of this time the deposit has collected in the neck of the bottle.

The neck of the bottle is then placed in a freezing mixture so that the deposit is solidified. The next process consists in getting rid of the deposit. This is done by removing the cork, when the pressure produced by the second fermentation due to the cane sugar, shoots out the frozen deposit leaving a clear sparkling wine.

The bottle is quickly passed to a workman who adds a small quantity of liqueur containing more or less sugar so as to produce a wine which will be "doux," "demi-sec" or "sec."

The bottles are then finally corked. The corks which are considerably larger in diameter than the necks of the bottle are placed in a machine which compresses them to the necessary dimension and are forced into the bottle by blows from a hammer which is worked on the principle of a pile-driving hammer.

The cork is only driven half way into the bottle which is passed to another workman who, by means of another machine, again compresses the extruding part of the cork but to a lesser degree than before and applies the tin cap and wire by which the cork is securely kept in place until such time as it is released in order to pour the wine into the consumer's glass.

The bottles are subsequently labelled, packed and got ready for distribution. Apparently the bottles can only be used once because the pressure of the wine, which is equal to about 6 atmospheres, causes so much disturbance of the glass molecules, that it would be impossible to use the same bottle twice. Thus the production of a bottle of champagne is a complicated matter.

Although this wine is supposed to be the "King of wines," I am not sure that one does not derive just as much satisfaction from more humble vintages. Personally I am very fond of some of the Swiss wines and I have a very pleasant recollection of a certain Neuchâtel which we had at the top of the Furka pass. Perhaps the environment has something to do with ones memories, and so I always think that there is no place where such excellent Vouvray can be had as at a little outdoor restaurant at the Pont de Cisse on the banks of the Loire a few kilometres from Tours. Another pleasant wine, somewhat similar, is to be found at Gaillac, a small town near Albi at which I stopped during a violent thunderstorm so that I might sample it.

It is perfectly true that many wines do not survive removal from the locality in which they are made any more than certain animals and plants survive removal from the environment in which they grow, and therefore we must take care to make the most of our opportunities as they present themselves to us.

I should like to discourse on the subject of wine at some length, but I think I will leave the